

The Two-Headed Eagle: Faces of Russian Foreign Policy

BY

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

The former Soviet states in Central and Eastern Europe comprise a prominent portion of the Russian Federation’s “Near Abroad.” During and since World War II, these countries have alternately served as an adversary avenue of approach and a security zone for the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War, these countries have remained a zone of competition and contestation between Russia and Western Europe. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, just over 25 million Soviet citizens of Russian cultural and linguistic descent were displaced beyond the Russian Federation’s border in newly independent states. In addition, the Soviet Union’s superpower status disappeared virtually overnight. Since then, President Boris Yeltsin and President Vladimir Putin have steadily attempted to restore Russia’s regional credibility in an attempt to revive Russia’s status as a great global power. The primary method for achieving this is through reconstitution of regional, multilateral institutions while remaining active in international institutions such as the United Nations. After Putin’s election as President in 2000, the Kremlin diverged from the erratic foreign policy dealings with the Near Abroad in 1990s through attempts to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia’s conflict with Georgia in 2008, occupation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, and continuing military involvement in Eastern Ukraine have damaged relations between the West and Russia. This discussion argues that Putin’s recent actions in the Near Abroad are consistent with past Soviet and Russian leaders’ desire to manage the securitization of these countries as a matter of honor and prestige as a precursor to restoring regional hegemony.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Reign of Peter (Petr) I “the Great” from 1682 to 1725 is widely regarded as the birth of the modern Russian state. Peter initiated a process of creating a legitimized “European Power.”¹ Today, Russia remains one of the great military and economic powers of the world despite a long history of “apparent economic backwardness.”² That backwardness has been attributed to a variety of disparate geographical, nationalistic, and economic characteristics. Based on its location, expansive size, and lack of appreciable natural barriers, Russia has historically relied on military power for national survival against a myriad of threats.

In the twentieth century, leaders from Marshal Joseph Stalin to President Vladimir Putin have faced persistent existential and internal threats resulting in three “striking continuities” in how Russia exerted its influence on its periphery. These three continuities include a history of “colonization and conquest” through expansionism, persistent “longevity of Russia” as a continental great power empire, encompassing “one-sixth of the world’s land surface” at its peak in the nineteenth century, and the enduring “concentration of political power” in the hands of “a small number of people, often just one man or woman – whether Peter...Catherine [the Great]...Joseph Stalin,” or President Putin today.³ Russia’s identity is formed by the implications of defending itself based on its geographical location and the consistent penchant by leaders to use Russian nationalism and honor to maintain power. This has often translated into despotism, expansionism, and the exercise of imperial influence within its own boundaries as well as the peripheral countries of the former Soviet Union.

¹ Heaney, Dominic, ed. *The Territories of the Russian Federation*. (14th ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 15.

² Shaw, Denis J.B. *Russia in the Modern World: A New Geography*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999), 18.

³ Rieber, Alfred J. in Ragsdale, Hugh, and Valerii Nikolaevich Ponomarev, eds. *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 323

Geography – Physical and Human Terrain: Necessity for Survival

With few geographic obstacles to prevent invasion from Western Europe or the Far East, the country has maintained a “constant preoccupation” with “territorial self-sufficiency and secure borders (Figure 1.1).”⁴ Following the devastation and debilitation of World War II (WWII), Stalin placed the USSR on a decades-long odyssey to prevent another invasion while attempting to maintain the country’s great power status through ruthless “personal dictatorship.”⁵



Figure 1: Basic Terrain Relief Map of Russia

Source: Adapted from: *World Atlas, Map of Russia*,

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countries/asia/runewzzz.gif>

Surrounded by European, East Asian, and Muslim civilizations to the west, east, and south, Russia has often felt a security dilemma more acutely than the distant US or Western European nations with mostly static and uncontested boundaries. As a result, Russia routinely adopted expansionist policies, motivated to create a Eurasian empire as a means of creating a buffer zone between its territory and hostile intruders to ensure national survival.⁶ By the turn of the twentieth century, Russia, as a continental empire, sought creation of Russian-controlled border regions to preserve territorial integrity and

⁴ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor In International Relations*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 31.

⁵ Shaw. *Russia in the Modern World*, 43.

⁶ Berryman, John. “Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy”, 531. Berryman, John. “Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy.” *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (March 30, 2012): 530–44, 532.

national security and as a means of providing insurance against intrusion.⁷ Despite such efforts, invasions from abroad persisted.

From the seventeenth century to the conclusion of WWII, the Russian Empire was invaded across its shared contiguous border with Europe at high cost in national treasure and millions of civilian and soldiers' lives no less than eleven times by Poles, Ottomans, Swedes, Austrians, French, British, and Germans.⁸ At the conclusion of World War II, the collapsed Russian Empire left an indelible imprint on the foreign policy of Stalin's USSR and the Russian Federation after the Cold War.⁹

In the earliest Cold War struggles with the United States and Western Europe, Stalin's 1948 blockade of Berlin demonstrated his desire to achieve the strategic goal of a "pro-Soviet, communist-dominated [German] government."¹⁰ Stalin's rationale for risking confrontation with the West centered on erecting a contiguous security zone around the Soviet Union's periphery based on the fear and emergent power of the Euro-Atlantic bloc underwritten by US industrial and military might during and after the war.¹¹ Though he was prepared to arrest Soviet expansion efforts in the face of staunch British and American opposition, Stalin did not overtly threaten them or risk war in the fledgling atomic era.¹² Stalin's attempt to blockade Berlin represented perhaps the most striking reminder to Western Europe and the United States of the USSR's long-term intention to gain and expand influence in territories on its periphery. Stalin's imposition of a forced status quo led to creation of a division between European and Soviet-dominated security complexes.

Russia's 2014 incursions into Ukraine are portrayed by the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as justified responses to Kiev's "armed suppression and socioeconomic strangulation of southeastern Ukraine." Russia has consistently portrayed its actions in Ukraine as responses to the United States and the European Union's disregard for

⁷ Berryman, "Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy," 532.

⁸ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, 32.

⁹ Berryman, "Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy," 532.

¹⁰ Miller, Roger G. *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949*. (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 12.

¹¹ Miller, *To Save a City*, 14.

¹² Miller, *To Save a City*, 14.

Russia's national interests.¹³ Mass protests in Kiev's Independence Square in February 2014 forced the corrupt Russian-backed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to flee the country at the behest of Russian advice and facilitation. The resultant power vacuum was quickly filled by Russian-backed agitators demanding closer ties to Moscow including potential inclusion in the Russian Federation.¹⁴

Russian intervention in the Crimea and the remainder of Eastern Ukraine are the most recent manifestations of Russia's continuing desire to dominate its periphery as a means of preserving its security. These interventions confirm long-held Western and European suspicions about President Vladimir Putin's long-term intentions in countries bordering Russia. After the end of the Cold War and through the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December 1991, Russia continued to maintain a vested interest in exerting influence over the 14 independent nation-states comprising its Near Abroad based on shared aspects of geography, culture and history.¹⁵



Figure 2: Commonwealth of Independent States (1994)

Source: Reprinted from: University of Texas,

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/commonwealth.jpg>

The Near Abroad - Nationalism and Honor

¹³ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Key Foreign Policy Events of 2014", http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arf/F991672ECE65419FC3257DBE002382A6?OpenDocument

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 235, 18 Dec 2014, 1.

¹⁵ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 248.

As a state forced to defend its outer periphery for the last five centuries, Russia's self-perception as a great power has remained a persistent component of national honor. Russia's history is littered with national solicitations to defend against attacks by stronger powers including the Mongols, Napoleon, and Hitler.¹⁶ To some degree, Russia's identity remains wedded to an enduring belief in its honor characterized by its perceived primacy in ethnically Russian lands as a central tenet of its regional and global power and strength.¹⁷ As part of that honor, Russia has long maintained its historical duty to shield Russian nationals in its Near Abroad, justifying interventions across Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, and present-day Ukraine.

When President Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as the last President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on 25 December 1991, the country ceased to exist as a monolithic empire.¹⁸ For many Russians, the USSR's collapse signified deep diminution of the state's authority over territories long associated with Russia's identity. In addition, Russian citizens realized the steady degradation of their homeland's superpower status to an often-marginalized regional power adrift in an uncertain global security landscape.¹⁹

As President Boris Yeltsin stepped into the breach to fill the leadership void, a newly independent Russia entered a tumultuous decade filled with promise at what the post-Soviet republic might become. But this decade also introduced a period of uncertainty for a country with a long history of tension with Europe and the West along with restive southern provinces and Asian neighbors, including China, India, and Japan. The 1990s served as period of economic, social, political, and international change for Russia. As the vestiges of the Warsaw Pact withered away, the Russian national psyche remained attached to a sense of ownership in these peripheral regions based on the presence of a large Russian diaspora and the absence of natural boundaries.

The post-Soviet Russian Federation (RF) remained attached to its former imperial territories, based on over 70 years of geographical, cultural and historical ties to the idea

¹⁶ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, 31.

¹⁷ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin*, 33.

¹⁸ Heaney, ed. *The Territories of the Russian Federation: 2013*, "Chronology of Russia", 20.

¹⁹ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 69.

of a Russian homeland.²⁰ The Russian concept of a national homeland became intertwined with the concept of the necessity to maintain a Russian empire as a means of preserving security. As a result, the Russian interpretation of such a homeland remains anchored to Europe but leaves unresolved questions regarding its legal authority to influence events in its Near Abroad as an extra-sovereign power.²¹ Dissolution of the Soviet Union effectively translated to decolonization. Even though nation-states within the CIS perceived their new identities as independent actors, Russia continued to insist on its ability to maintain stability as the most powerful regional actor.

Yet, Russia's decolonization was different than the Western European experience. For Western European states after WWII, decolonization was more distinctive based on the vast territorial expanses separating them from their colonies and protectorates. Such territorial divides did not exist for the Soviet Union upon dissolution. Instead, "by 1989 some 25 million Russians (or over 17 per cent of all the Russians in the USSR) were living outside the Russian Federation."²² During the two years following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the final demise of the USSR in December 1991, the reconstituted Russian Federation (RF) faced new problems based on its geography and its large diaspora. For brevity, this discussion will refer to the RF as Russia for the duration of this argument. Figure 1.3 illustrates the pockets of displaced Russians beyond the once the USSR dissolved.

²⁰ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 248.

²¹ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 71.

²² Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 67-70.

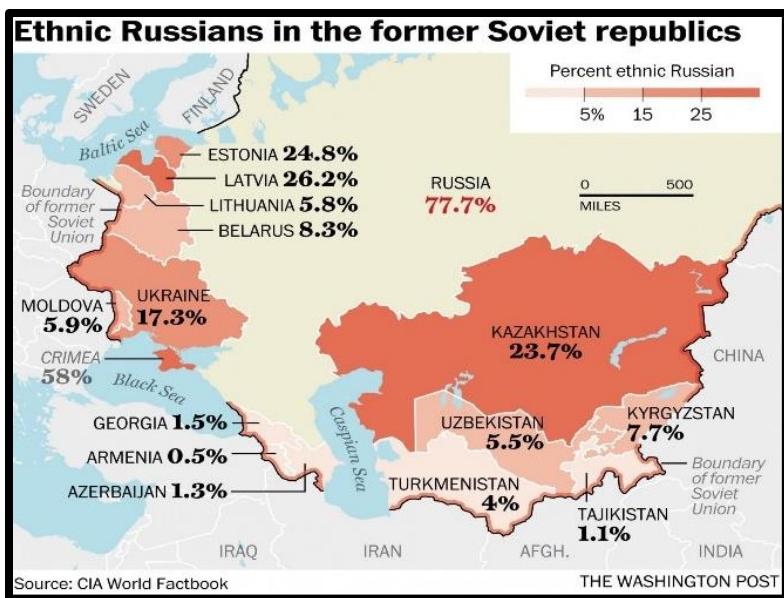


Figure 3: Ethnic Russians in Newly Independent States (1994)

Source: Reprinted from: *The Washington Post*,

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-kazakhstan-fears-of-becoming-the-next-ukraine/2015/05/01/10f7e73c-e878-11e4-8581-633c536add4b_story.html

After 1991, Russians within the country's borders as well as those in the Near Abroad found it difficult to face an uncertain future as a degraded power with a distinctly diluted role in world affairs.²³ Nationalism and honor are two of the key reasons Russia continues to maintain its ability and intent to intercede in the affairs of its neighbors based on their location within the former Soviet sphere.²⁴

International Relations Theory and Post-Soviet Russia

World War II opened a new era in international relations as the Big Three alliance between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the USSR quickly transformed into a new bipolar reality at the war's conclusion. As the age of empire receded and the United Kingdom struggled to re-build and maintain European cohesion, a bipolar great power dynamic steadily emerged between a triumphant United States and a depleted Soviet Union. This bipolar arrangement materialized in a self-help, anarchic system in which both countries ultimately believed their survival depended principally on building

²³ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 248.

²⁴ Shaw, *Russia in the Modern World*, 248.

massive defense establishments, resulting in a cascade of tit-for-tat power balancing against each other.

As President Harry S. Truman implemented his doctrine of containment through support for new democracies of the perceived rising tide of communism, Stalin began to tighten the noose of control on Eastern European states. This led to both the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Defense Treaty serving as the basis for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In response, Stalin created the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) leading to the Warsaw Pact's later creation, effectively dividing the globe into the two Cold War camps. The United States and the Soviet Union became the only nations capable of projecting power globally. From a realist perspective, great power politics was defined to a significant degree by the “root cleavage...between capitalist democracy and godless communism” until the fall of the Soviet Union.²⁵

When the USSR dissolved, the initial promise of a revitalized and westernized Russia gradually receded. As Yeltsin led the country during the 1990s, economic strife, internal instability, and conflict in Russia’s Near Abroad highlighted the country’s challenges. Many challenges attenuated from the era of Soviet mismanagement, but the introduction of liberal policies modeled on Western ideals created tension for the Yeltsin government. Yeltsin and other post-Soviet policymakers remained divided by two broad philosophies regarding the country’s future geopolitical and economic direction. On one side, Statists defined national goals in terms of restoring Russia’s great power status through the provision of domestic and regional security. At the other end of the spectrum, Westernizers sought opportunities to embrace the “Other” who helped shape Russia’s national identity.

Europe and the West served as “Russia’s significant Other,” shaping the country’s internal view of itself and its external view of the world.²⁶ As conflicts erupted within Russia and the former Soviet republics through the mid-1990s, Russia’s initial proclivities towards the West at the expense of Near Abroad engagement gradually

²⁵ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979), 170-171.

²⁶ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. (Lanham, Maryland: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 18.

evaporated.²⁷ The resultant tension between Westernizers and Statists helped define Russia's foreign policy in the 1990s, influencing how and why it acted in its near abroad.

As fighting between Russian forces and Chechen separatists simmered then cooled by 1996, President Yeltsin faced increased internal scrutiny for his handling of the war and erratic direction of the government. As the Asian Financial Crisis triggered a precipitous decline in Russia's economy by the summer of 1998, Yeltsin implemented a slew of management exigencies designed to arrest the declining value of the Russian ruble and bolster public confidence in a Kremlin facing its second war in Chechnya. A tumultuous 1998 and 1999 concluded with two bomb attacks in Moscow apartment blocks, killing almost 200 in September 1999. With the government in turmoil, Yeltsin hired then fired two successive Prime Ministers before appointing Vladimir Putin to the post. After Yeltsin unceremoniously and unexpectedly resigned in December 1999, Putin's ascendancy to President was complete as he replaced Yeltsin temporarily, and then was elected outright as President in March 2000.

The international relations (IR) theory identified by Kenneth Waltz as structural realism served as the dominant explanatory theory for explaining Soviet foreign policy under Joseph Stalin from the end of World War II through his death in 1953. During Yeltsin's tumultuous reign, liberalism and pro-western proclivities served as dominant themes amidst the promise that Western Europe and the United States would perhaps offer assistance and even alliance with Russia.

Alexander Wendt's social theory, constructivism, helps further explain relations between Russia and the West. The Russian state emerging at the opening of the twenty-first century was a state defined by its complex relationships with its significant other – Western Europe and the United States. Contrary to western desires for a democratized and openly liberal nation complete with robust legal frameworks and economic practices, President Putin often selected an independent, pragmatic foreign policy approach in relations with the Near Abroad. Reliant on a combination of soft power tactics and Russian military power, this unique approach has often pitted Russia against Western European and US interests. As a result, President Putin attempted to resolve two key complexities regarding Russia's national identity. From an external perspective, the

²⁷ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 18.

relationship between Russia and the West served as a core feature of Russia's self-identity. Domestically, Putin's policies increasingly included suspension of democratization and liberalization efforts initiated during the Yeltsin years, tarnishing the image of a progressive nation attempting to reform. Failure to resolve the tension between balancing the country's international relations with internal reforms has progressively threatened the Kremlin's legitimacy in the West.

Beyond structural realism and constructivism, this thesis will utilize the Regional Security Order (RSO) and Regional Powers and Security Framework (RPSF) to identify core themes in Russia's approach to the Near Abroad. Using Buzan and Waever's RSO framework to describe the Cold War regional security structure, the RPSF adds additional explanatory power to Russia's regional relations through the Yeltsin and Putin years. According to Buzan and Waever, regional security complexes (RSCs) evolved beginning with the spread of decolonization through the 1960s and 1970s. When the Cold War ended, the dominant bipolar system devolved into RSCs sometimes dominated by one or more great powers. In Eurasia, the demise of the Soviet Union created a European RSC and a post-Soviet RSC as illustrated in Figure 1.4.

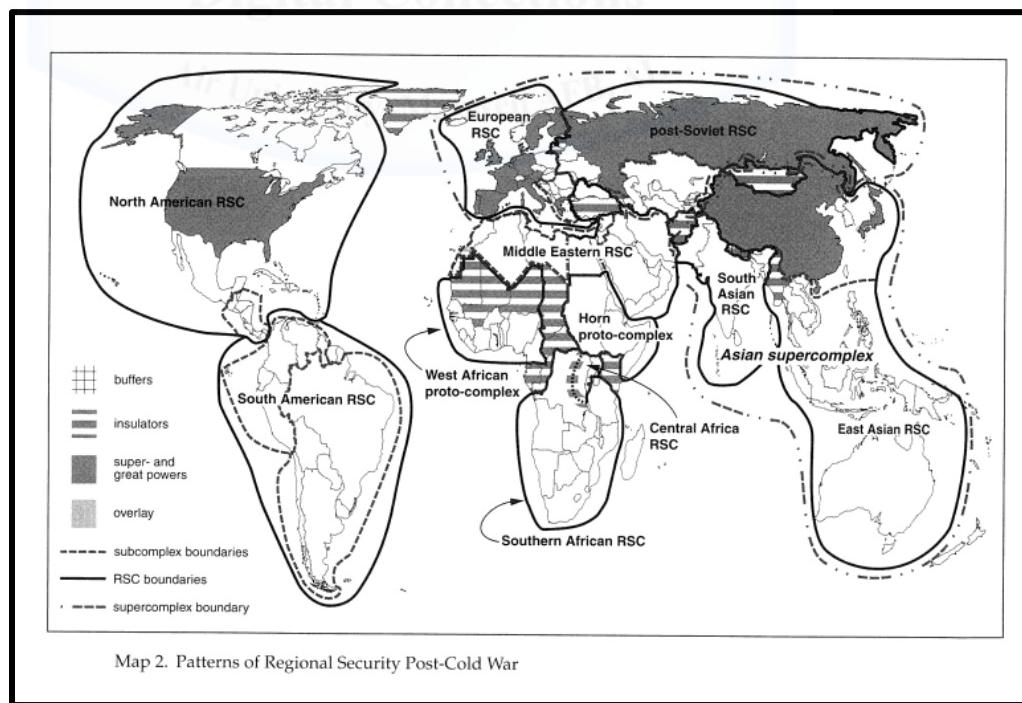


Figure 4: Global Regional Security Complexes after USSR's dissolution
 Source: Reprinted from: Buzan and Waever – *Regional Security Orders*

The RPSF outlined by Robert Stewart-Ingwersoll and Derrick Frazier provide additional useful terminology for identifying consistencies in Russian behavior towards its European Near Abroad. Russian leadership, custodianship, and protection roles after WWII through the first presidential term of President Vladimir Putin will be used to identify the country's foreign policy orientation. Figure 1.2 provides a brief description of these roles and orientations.

Table 1: RPSF: Foreign Policy Roles and Orientations

Foreign Policy Roles ²⁸	Definition
Leadership	Gaining cooperation within an RSO based on mutually beneficial objectives
Custodianship	Stabilizing the current RSO rather than attempting to modify or destroy its structure
Protection	Unique responsibility of a great power within an RSO to protect other states from external threats
Foreign Policy Orientations ²⁹	Explanation
Status Quo vs. Revisionist	Describes whether a great power within an RSO seeks to maintain status quo through stabilizing actions or seeks to revise the order in accordance with its own national interests
Unilateral vs. Multilateral	Extent to which a great power within an RSO actively cooperates and/or coordinates with other regional states to achieve collective objectives based on mutually beneficial reciprocity and shared legal standards
Proactive vs. Reactive	Extent to which a great power acts within an RSO to achieve long-term goals extending into the future vs. immediate actions taken against specific security threats

Source: Adapted from: Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier, pages 10-13

Case Studies and Thesis

This study will utilize a historical process tracing methodology to examine periods immediately following crises which threatened the survival of the USSR and Russia to identify foreign policy consistencies in its Near Abroad. Specifically, this research will utilize four historical focus periods. The first period consists of an examination of the USSR's foreign policy considerations immediately after World War II as envisioned and executed by Marshal Josef Stalin (1946-1953). During the second period extending for the duration of the Cold War, the Soviet Union demonstrated a consistent propensity to act militarily during crises to maintain stability and control within its Warsaw Pact security zone. The third crisis for Russian interests occurred with

²⁸ Stewart-Ingwersoll, Robert, and Derrick Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework*. (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), 11.

²⁹ Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 12-13.

dissolution of the USSR. This period extends from the end of the Cold War in 1991 to the end of President Boris Yeltsin's presidency in 1999. A fourth crisis period for Russia occurred between 1999 and 2009 as the country prosecuted controversial wars in Chechnya and Georgia, while its economy rebounded after the 1998 financial crisis. Russia struggled to recover from the tumultuous first post-Soviet decade. The fourth historical period will examine the change in foreign policy considerations following the conclusion of Yeltsin's presidency and Putin's rise, culminating with Russia's war against Georgia in 2008. This research will draw conclusions from each period in order to identify consistencies in Russian foreign policy actions in its near abroad often perceived as expansionist and imperialist while Putin's regime adopted despot-like domestic policies.

In order to understand these perceptions, it is necessary to define three key terms. Despotism refers to the tendency by a leader or government to exercise unrestrained authority through state security instruments over its own people.³⁰ Expansionism refers to territorial aggrandizement at the expense of neighboring states.³¹ This expansionism is a necessary pre-cursor for Russia to exercise imperial control or influence in its Near Abroad through direct or proxy rule of its acquisitions based on extensive and restrictive economic, political, and security controls.³² The argument below will demonstrate that Putin's regime seeks to maintain stability through enhanced state controls, limiting the average Russian citizen's access to a free and fair media and political choice. While Putin's practices are not yet reminiscent of Josef Stalin, the deteriorating domestic political environment indicates Putin intends to remain indeterminately.

This thesis argues that President Putin has frequently selected a pragmatic, strength-based approach to foreign policy in the Near Abroad in order to restore Russian regional hegemony. This argument adopts the following research questions as a means of proving this argument: Is Russia's foreign policy today consistent with previous post-conflict periods in what is now considered the nation's near abroad? What are the Russian identity consistencies during the eras of Stalin, Yeltsin and Putin? How did external and domestic influences shape Russia's foreign policy in the Near Abroad?

³⁰ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc, 2008), 339.

³¹ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc, 2008), 439.

³² Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th Ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc, 2008), 623.

This research seeks to determine how the Russian government formulates and executes a foreign policy which often brings the Kremlin into conflict with Western European and American national interests.



Chapter 2

Stalin – 1946 – 1953

The establishment of the Cominform [Communist Information Bureau] was motivated not by the Marshall Plan but by Stalin's growing conviction that the east European states must conform to his own harsh methods of dictatorial rule. Stalin's determination to prevent any further 'contamination' from the West in the Soviet Union necessitated the Stalinization of eastern Europe.

- Mark Kramer, "Stalin, Soviet Policy and Eastern Europe."

World War II – Termination and Influences

In The Great Patriotic War, an estimated 26 million military and civilian personnel died in the Soviet Union. Of that number, "more than one million were Soviet Jews, victims of the Nazi programme of extermination launched in 1941 that claimed the lives of 6 million European Jews."¹ Among the Allies, the Soviet Union suffered the most physical destruction and loss of life. While the United States and Britain would ally themselves with Stalin during the war, the situation would change rapidly after Hitler's defeat. Once World War II ended and a common foe disappeared, Stalin consistently pursued two goals as a new post-war power arrangement emerged with Western Europe and the United States. These goals were consistent with comments he made and published many years before the outbreak of war.

In a "Report to the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets" on 26 December 1922, Stalin had expressed his belief that the "world had split into two camps: the camp of socialism and the camp of capitalism." Using World War I as evidence, he characterized the capitalist states (i.e. Western Europe and the United States) as responsible for "imperialist war, national enmity, oppression, colonial slavery, and chauvinism." The Soviet camp, according to Stalin, was built on "mutual confidence, national equality, and the peaceful coexistence and fraternal collaboration of peoples." Using these, he expanded on his belief that an "amalgamation" of a "Union of Republics" should be created as a "reliable bulwark against international capitalism" as the first step in creating "a single world socialist Soviet Republic."²

¹ "World War II" in Oxford Military History, 1007.

² Stalin, Joseph. Marxism and the National Question. (New York: International Publishers), 124-125.

Stalin, ever distrustful of internal dissent and misinformation from subordinates, maintained an ever-tightening grip on power through the 1920s into the 1930s. In order to maintain internal control and crush any dissent against his regime, Stalin's purges of the Red Army and Soviet Air Force officer corps by the late 1930s reinforced his tightening despotic grip on power.³ By the late 1930s, his subordinates' angst grew over an impending German invasion across the USSR's western republics of Belarus and Ukraine. Domestically, he remained committed to the preservation of the governmental and political system inherited from the USSR's luminary founder, Vladimir Lenin.⁴

Surrounded by a small team of advisors on the eve of the World War II, Stalin conferred often with the Soviet People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko, Chief of the General Staff Zhukov and his most trusted advisor, Foreign Minister Molotov. Yet, as these advisors began sounding alarms about Nazi intentions on the USSR's flanks, Stalin "put faith in his own judgment" and chose to ignore numerous sightings of Luftwaffe aircraft on reconnaissance missions over the western USSR.⁵

During and after the war, Stalin held two core goals for the USSR. First, his military strategy would revolve around regaining and preserving a buffer zone between Russia and his historically aggressive neighbors to the west, east and south. Second, Stalin pursued recognition as a new superpower after the war based on "considerable concessions from the allies, given the enormous sacrifice the Soviet Union had made to contribute to the defeat of Germany."⁶

The USSR's Re-establishment of Territorial Control

Before WWII, Stalin demonstrated the Soviet Union's expansionist behavior as a means of preserving security. The August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, alternatively known as the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact, effectively brought Hitler and Stalin into alliance with each other to address different security imperatives. Hitler's "absolute imperative was to avoid a two-front war" while Stalin's was the creation of a buffer zone,

³ Service, Robert. *Stalin: A Biography*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 3

⁴ Service, *Stalin*, 9.

⁵ Service, *Stalin*, 411.

⁶ Kuromiya, Hiroaki. *Stalin: Profiles in Power*. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 183.

dividing “Eastern Europe into separate spheres of influence.”⁷ After the war, Stalin had no intention of ceding the territorial spoils gained during its costly war effort against Nazi Germany.

In November 1943, Stalin travelled for the first time by aircraft to meet Roosevelt and Churchill at Tehran, Iran. Stalin received his first indications that the Western leaders would acquiesce to his demands for remuneration vis-à-vis territory at this meeting. He regained assurances of a return of the pre-1941 Soviet-Polish border as well as complete re-annexation of the Baltic States. The “preponderance of men and materials swung inexorably to the Soviet side” as Hitler’s Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe crumbled. Simultaneously, Allied military preparations for the Normandy invasion continued on Hitler’s English Channel coastal front.

Waiting until the Germans had crushed the anti-communist Polish Home Guard, Stalin kept the “Red Army immobile.”⁸ Stalin had no intention of fortifying the Polish partisans in their fight against the Wehrmacht. Instead, he directed his forces to stay on the far side of the Vistula River while the “Poles fought alone and heroically before being compelled to surrender on October 9 to an overwhelming German force.”⁹ During the fighting, Stalin refused to allow “Anglo-American aircraft to use Soviet air bases to drop arms and supplies to the insurgents,” further emasculating them.¹⁰ With Poland’s Home Guard shattered and Warsaw destroyed, Stalin directed the VVS and Red Army to engage a weakened German force. Stalin achieved his desired goal of installing a “Soviet-sponsored…government,” translating to de facto Soviet “political authority” over the capital. The Red Army and VVS would steadily expunge the rest of Poland by early February 1945, establishing themselves “only 38 miles from Berlin.” Yet, Stalin’s method of achieving victory in Poland served as an “important turning point” in relations with the Anglo-American alliance “causing [them] to suspect Stalin’s commitment to international cooperation.”¹¹

⁷ Tooze, Adam. *The Wages of Destruction*. (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 320.

⁸ Lewis, *Stalin*, 133.

⁹ Von Hardesty, *Red Phoenix Rising*, 325

¹⁰ Kuromiya, *Stalin*, 181.

¹¹ Kuromiya, *Stalin*, 181.

By the end of 1944, the Soviet Red Army had regained Romania, Bulgaria and half of Hungary and had allied with Tito's partisans to eject the Nazis from the Balkans.¹² On 7 November 1944, Stalin triumphantly proclaimed that the Red Army had "rained incessant blows on the enemy, each one stronger than the last."¹³ Touting the success against the Wehrmacht in "liberation of their native soil from the Hitlerite pollution," Stalin vowed prophetically to help the "peoples of Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia...to regain their freedom and independence."¹⁴ His aspirations since Tehran had expanded to match the success his forces were having on the ground and in the air. These gains would serve as later justification for maintaining Soviet control of these six Eastern European countries.

The final rout of Hitler's Nazis on the Eastern Front occurred in the spring of 1945. Hitler's last military units convulsed in a spasm of defensive actions as they attempted to hold Berlin against the rejuvenated and numerically superior Soviets. Following Hitler's suicide on 30 April 1945, the last vestiges of the Nazi military withered at the hands of the Red Army and the VVS.¹⁵ On 2 May, the commander of the Berlin Garrison, General Helmuth Weidling, surrendered to Soviet General V.I. Chuikov. The general surrender on 9 May marked final victory for the Soviets and the western allies. The Soviets had effectively helped deliver the "unconditional surrender to Allies" even as the Western Allies overran western and central Germany. Victory in Europe signified vindication for Stalin and his military. The VVS, with over 20,000 warplanes now in its inventory, "controlled the entire airspace on the periphery of the Soviet Union – in the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Far East."¹⁶

Though certainly not the primary reason for the resurgence of the Soviet military, Anglo-American Lend-Lease contributed significantly to the Soviet effort on the Eastern Front. From 1941 until the end of the war, the British supplied Hurricane fighter aircraft while the Americans sent over 14,000 additional aircraft. Lend-Lease was designed as

¹² Lewis, *Stalin*, 134.

¹³ Stalin, J.V. "Order of the Day, No. 220,"
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1944/11/07.htm>

¹⁴ Stalin, J.V. "Order of the Day, No. 220"

¹⁵ Hardesty, Von, and Ilya Grinberg. *Red Phoenix Rising: The Soviet Air Force in World War II*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 338.

¹⁶ Von Hardesty, et. al., *Red Phoenix Rising*, 341.

“much a political tool as a military one.”¹⁷ By extending the program from Britain to the USSR early on, Roosevelt had managed to keep the Grand Alliance together. Yet the pragmatism of war would give way to other national desires once the fighting in Europe ceased. Stalin’s goals proved to be the most expansionist and ultimately imperialist consistent with his own behavior in 1939-1940.

War Termination – Recognition

The 1943 Tehran meeting served as the initial forum for the Big Three to synchronize military operations and discuss contentious war termination issues, including territorial divisions.¹⁸ Churchill desired a westward shift of the Polish and German borders, accommodating Stalin’s fixation on security.¹⁹ Churchill traveled to Moscow to see Stalin again in October 1944. Proposing a percentages agreement directly to Stalin, Churchill recommended territorial division between the Anglo-American bloc on one side and the Soviets on the other. As part of this agreement, Churchill conceded 90 percent interest in Romania and 75 percent in Bulgaria to Russia in exchange for 90 percent interest in Greece to the United Kingdom and the United States. Yugoslavia and Hungary would be divided evenly between the Soviets and the Anglo-American alliance. While Stalin consented to such a division, FDR’s absence at the Moscow meeting prevented further discussion or implementation of territorial aggrandizement until war’s end.²⁰

While Stalin made no mention of Germany or his early public proclamations about the liberation of Poland and Czechoslovakia, these remained on the agenda when the three leaders met again at Yalta on the Crimean peninsula on 4 February 1945.²¹ Again, negotiations centered on territorial issues but were concentrated on post-war management of Germany and the creation of the postwar international order.²² Based on decimation of the Nazis on the Eastern Front, Stalin “was now the master of Eastern

¹⁷ Overy, Richard J. *The Air War: 1939-1945*. (Potomac Edition. London: Europa Publications, Ltd., 1980), 56.

¹⁸ Ikenberry, G. John. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 175.

¹⁹ Service, *Stalin*, 463.

²⁰ Churchill, Winston. *Memoirs of the Second World War*. (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), 885-886.

²¹ Service, *Stalin*, 465.

²² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 175.

Europe.”²³ He successfully received assurances from Churchill and Roosevelt that he would receive “reparations to the value of twenty billion dollars from Germany” once Germany was defeated and the USSR entered the war against Japan in the Far East.²⁴

Based on the high Soviet price for achieving victory against Germany, Stalin advocated for a Soviet freedom of action within the European territories gained during the war. Additionally, he wanted assurances that south Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands in Russia’s Far East would be his after joining the fight against Japan in the Pacific. Stalin continued to advocate for a security zone between its border and any future Western adversary.²⁵ Two months later, FDR succumbed to his long illness just as World War II neared its end. Vice-President Harry Truman ascended to the US Presidency as a domestically and internationally recognized right-wing conservative.²⁶ Additionally, shortly after the war ended, Clement Attlee replaced Churchill as the new Prime Minister. Despite the transition of key leaders, Stalin succeeded in laying claim to a vast Soviet empire larger than any extant during the reign of the Tsars before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.²⁷

Impact of Domestic Politics & Economics on Policy Making

In his 1960 biographical sketch of Stalin, acclaimed US State Department Ambassador to Moscow George F. Kennan remarked that Stalin possessed the “most extraordinary talent for political tactics and intrigue” as a “master...of the art of playing people and forces off against each other for his own benefit.”²⁸ Until his death in 1953, Stalin’s unrelenting grip on Soviet society lasted nearly thirty years. He maintained tight personal control over all rivals, the Communist party, and the state security apparatus. The enduring perception Stalin maintained and conveyed throughout his life was that the USSR and its Russian ethnic population were constantly at risk. After the war ended, this penchant only intensified as he inflated the threat of a hostile military invasion aimed at destroying the Soviet state. In order to protect his personal power at the top of the Soviet

²³ Lewis, *Stalin*, 134.

²⁴ Service, *Stalin*, 465.

²⁵ Service, *Stalin*, 467.

²⁶ Service, *Stalin*, 468.

²⁷ Stalin, Josef Vissarionovich. In “Oxford Companion to Military History”, ed Holmes, 873.

²⁸ Kennan, George F. *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 248.

hierarchy, Stalin skillfully cultivated divisions among his opponents, exploiting their hostility to each other to weaken them, regardless of their political ideology.²⁹

During Stalin’s “Victory Speech” to the Soviet people on 9 May 1945, he emphasized the Soviet Union’s strength and resilience in its triumph over Hitler’s Germany.³⁰ He omitted any reference to the Grand Alliance or the high price of the war to the Soviet Union. In a subsequent “Speech to the People,” on 2 September 1945, Stalin announced the separate unconditional surrender of Japan, referring to China, the USA and Britain as Allies. Unlike the speech commemorating the end of the war in the European theater, Stalin referred to a long list of grievances against Japan which were used as justifications for reclaiming southern Sakhalin Island and the outer Kurile Islands to prevent any future threat of Japanese aggression. Unlike the European victory speech, Stalin concluded his speech with applause for the Grand Alliance: “Glory to the armed forces of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, China and Great Britain which achieved victory over Japan!”³¹

With World War II now over, Stalin maintained three goals for the USSR: enhanced domestic control, military enhancement, and strengthened international security. First, his unrelenting personal control remained absolute. As during the war, Stalin unremittingly maintained tight control over state institutions, personnel and procedures. Stalin was now sixty-six years old and suffered acute cardiac problems. Despite his deteriorating health, he maintained his ability to wield instruments of state terror to sustain his personal power. While the psychological reasons for Stalin’s use of brutality and repression are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is clear that Stalin transformed the Soviet Union into a militarized state in which citizens had only two choices – survive through acceptance of Stalinism or suffer the dire consequences of resistance.³²

²⁹ Kennan, *Russia and the West*, 250-253.

³⁰ Stalin, J.V. “Stalin’s Address to the People: Victory Speech”, *Thirty Years of the Soviet State Calendar*, published by Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1947; Transcription/HTML: Mike B. for MIA, 2008 <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1945/05/09a.htm>

³¹ Stalin, J.V. “Stalin’s Address to the People, 2 September 1945.” Source : Works, Vol. 16
Publisher : Red Star Press Ltd., London, 1986, Transcription/HTML Markup : Salil Sen for MIA, 2009
(Marxist Internet Archive, 2009), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1945/09/02.htm>

³² Service, *Stalin*, 491-493.

Economically, Stalin recognized that Soviet citizens would expect some level of improvement over what they'd endured during the lengthy war. The war's destruction and heavy death toll inhibited the USSR's export of vital natural resources such as grain, oil, and timber. As a result, the country suffered from an inability to import modern machinery and technology without outside assistance. In the early period after the war, Stalin sought American financial assistance to rectify the trade imbalance.³³ This eventually became untenable when the offer outlined in the Marshall Plan of 1947 pitted US interests against Stalin's aspirations of maintaining control of East European territorial gains. Though initially cognizant of the domestic imperative to expand food and industrial supplies to the Soviet population between 1946 and 1948, the Kremlin offered only rhetoric with little action.³⁴ A poor harvest in 1946 and the collective-farm system were blamed for famine in Ukraine causing millions of deaths by the late 1940s.³⁵ As one would expect, Stalin makes no mention of either economic deprivation or famine in public speeches, interviews, or statements. In short, he remained confident in his abilities to deflect attention away from domestic adversity even as most Soviet citizens suffered from hunger and personal privations.³⁶

In lieu of national economic and personal civilian prosperity, Stalin sought to maintain the military strength of the USSR built during the war. Assuming the title of Generalissimo on 28 June 1945, he intensified efforts to regiment Soviet public and private life through continuation of wartime policies. Official state-controlled media promulgated the societal need for enduring militarization based on the portrayal of the peacetime environment as only a temporary condition in the face of a persistent threat from Europe and the United States.³⁷ In his Order of the Day issued on 30 April 1946, Stalin reiterated the importance of national vigilance that in turn necessitated a strong military and a constant defensive posture.³⁸

³³ Service, *Stalin*, 494.

³⁴ Service, *Stalin*, 497.

³⁵ Service, *Stalin*, 498.

³⁶ Service, *Stalin*, 495.

³⁷ Service, *Stalin*, 493.

³⁸ Stalin, "Order of the Day, Issued by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". (*Documents in American Foreign Relations*, Vol VIII, July 1, 1945 – December 31, 1946), 846

Additionally, Stalin sought to gain military parity with the United States through development of the USSR's own atomic weapon and long-range delivery capabilities.

Placing trusted Politburo party member Lavrentiy Beria in charge of the Soviet development effort, Stalin directed development an atomic weapon "to catch up with the Americans without delay."³⁹ Beria also played a key role in the technical modernization of the VVS. Refusing to turn over three advanced B-29 aircraft to the USAAF which landed in the Russian Far East near the end of the war, Stalin directed Beria to reverse-engineer a Soviet equivalent. The clone aircraft, the TU-4, first flew in 1947 while the USSR detonated its first atomic weapon in 1949.⁴⁰

From a state security perspective, Stalin sought to reinforce territorial gains achieved in Eastern Europe during World War II. Realizing the new international dynamics in Europe and Japan were underwritten by overwhelming US economic and military power, Stalin remained sensitive to the Soviet Union's relative weakness.⁴¹ As a result, he intended to maintain and reinforce Moscow's European territorial acquisitions while rebuilding indigenous military capabilities. Conciliatory remarks to the United States and to foreign correspondents in 1946 indicated Stalin initially had no intention of making the unique administration of Germany into a friction point with the United States, France or Britain. In an interview given on 24 September 1946 to the London Sunday Times, Stalin expressed his desire to remain true to the July 1945 Potsdam Conference attended by Churchill and his successor Attlee along with President Truman.

Emphasizing the Soviet goal of preventing German remilitarization while encouraging democratization, Stalin reiterated his priority on collaboration with western democracies the existence of an ideological chasm.⁴² Given Stalin's history, it is very likely that he secreted his real intentions from the Western world as well as his own advisors. Yet, by 1947, Stalin's policy in Eastern and Central Europe would make his future intentions obvious.

World War II ended without a single conclusive and comprehensive peace settlement similar to World War I's Versailles Treaty. As a result, US-led efforts to

³⁹ Service, *Stalin*, 494

⁴⁰ Von Hardesty, *Red Phoenix Rising*, 344-352.

⁴¹ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 167.

⁴² Documents of American Foreign Relations, 1946, Vol VIII, 847.

establish a rules-based international system based on common security, economic, and political aspirations clashed with Soviet aspirations to remain the dominant Eurasian power.⁴³ When US Secretary of State George Marshall announced a massive economic infusion (the Marshall Plan) on 5 June 1947, Stalin initially demurred then directed Molotov to denounce conditions of the plan based on a supposition that acceptance would amount to subjugation to US economic interests.⁴⁴

The post-war settlement facilitated the historically unprecedented fragmentary nature of the bipolar order based on the enduring institutional differences between the Soviet and US ideologies and goals.⁴⁵ Between 1945 and the end of 1947, the dust settled on a new international order, smashing the pre-war imperial system. While signs of deterioration in the Grand Alliance were present before the war ended, George Kennan's famous Long Telegram of 22 February 1946 and Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech on 5 March 1946 placed the United States and Britain directly at odds with Stalin's security aspirations.

Before the war was over in Europe, Stalin initiated a process of domination over the weaker and defeated states in the European Near Abroad. G. John Ikenberry identified the “imposition of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe” as “an extreme version of this strategy.”⁴⁶ In conversations with Milovan Djilas regarding Soviet actions in Eastern Europe, Stalin stated: “war [was] not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as their army can reach.”⁴⁷ At the July 1945 Potsdam Conference to formalize distribution of authority and remunerations in Germany, Churchill expressed concerns to Stalin that “it looked as if Russia were rolling on westwards.”⁴⁸ Stalin dismissed these claims but failed to convince Truman or Churchill of the veracity of his comments through his actions and subsequent words.

⁴³ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 163.

⁴⁴ Di Biagio, Anna, "The Marshall Plan and the Founding of the Cominform, June-September 1947" in Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 210.

⁴⁵ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 163.

⁴⁶ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 50.

⁴⁷ Djilas, Milovan. *Conversations with Stalin*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), 81.

⁴⁸ Churchill, Winston, *Triumph and Tragedy*. (Cambridge, MA, 1953), 352.

Early Cold War - Foreign Policy in Near Abroad

The relationship among the members of the Grand Alliance during World War II was “from the start....characterized by strain and suspicion.”⁴⁹ While the Big Three were able to patch up the fissures in this relationship through a war waged against a common enemy, FDR’s death and Churchill’s departure as British Prime Minister created new dynamics for the three nations. In the United States, presidential policy emphasized establishment abroad of an open global economic system founded on democratic ideals as Europe and Japan slowly recovered, aided by significant financial assistance and bureaucratic influence from the US.⁵⁰ Signs of weakness in the Big Three alliance, however, were evident even before the final Nazi unconditional surrender was signed on 9 May 1945. The United States preemptively terminated Lend-Lease to the Soviets as Nazi Germany’s demise became apparent, ordering ships already bound for the Soviet Union to turn around. And while Stalin had sent Soviet Foreign Minister to San Francisco in April 1945 to begin negotiations on the new United Nations organization, negotiations were tense as the USSR sought membership to the Security Council along with veto authority.⁵¹

After the war, Stalin maintained two primary foreign policy goals for the USSR. First and foremost, Stalin and other Kremlin insiders intended to retain the Eastern European security buffer zone amassed during the war in order to prevent a future invasion from a revitalized Germany or another European power.⁵² Secondly, Stalin gradually felt the USSR deserved recognition by and superpower parity with the United States based on its vast contributions in defeating Nazi Germany.⁵³ These two policy goals pushed the Soviet Union into conflict with the Anglo-Americans as well as new international institutions after the war.

Within Kennan’s communique to the State Department, he indicated the persistent nature of the “Kremlin’s neurotic view of world affairs” rooted in a “traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.” Kennan linked Russian insecurity to a fear of

⁴⁹ Service, *Stalin*, 502.

⁵⁰ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 175.

⁵¹ Service, *Stalin*, 503.

⁵² Kramer, Mark. “Stalin, Soviet Policy, and the Establishment of a Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe, 1941-1948” in Snyder, Timothy, and Ray Brandon, eds. *Stalin and Europe: Imitation and Domination, 1928-1953*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2014), 270-271.

⁵³ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 175.

“foreign penetration” that drove a need to “seek security only in a patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts or compromises with it.”⁵⁴ For his part, Churchill stated that Stalin was capitalizing on his power to implement a barrier across the heart of Europe.⁵⁵ Given the high-fidelity information he received from his intelligence and security apparatus, Stalin likely understood both the content of these communications as well as their intent to place limits on Soviet expansion.⁵⁶ In response to Churchill’s speech, Stalin provided an interview to Russian state newspaper *Pravda*, labelling Churchill’s speech as a dangerous act. Stalin justified the desire to maintain loyal and compliant governments in these countries to preserve Soviet security by citing the destructive nature of the German march across Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary.⁵⁷

After the Long Telegram and the “Iron Curtain” speech, Stalin’s position towards the United States and proposed post-war institutions steadily hardened. Refusing to join the July 1944 Bretton Woods institutions established by the Allies, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Stalin utilized the Cominform to initiate the formation of an alternative power bloc and a USSR sphere of influence in its Eastern European near abroad. While there is no definitive date for the start of the Cold War, the critical transition period shifting permanently away from the Grand Alliance of the war occurs from early 1946 through the summer of 1947. This period is bracketed by Kennan’s delivery of the Long Telegram in February 1946 and President’s Truman’s delivery of his new doctrine along with the Marshall Plan by June 1947. Together, Stalin viewed the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as affronts to his ability to wield control and influence in his Near Abroad periphery, threatening the USSR’s security. Stalin used the victory in World War II to tout the righteousness of the Soviet system and its ideology in the Near Abroad. This remained the enduring feature of the

⁵⁴ Kennan, George F. “The Long Telegram”, Truman Presidential Library, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf, 5-6.

⁵⁵ Service, *Stalin*, 503.

⁵⁶ Service, *Stalin*, 503.

⁵⁷ Stalin, J.V. “Interview to Pravda Correspondent Concerning Mr. Winston Churchill’s Speech at Fulton,” March, 1946, Source: *J. V. Stalin on Post-War International Relations* Publisher: Soviet News, 1947, Transcription/Markup: Brian Reid for MIA, 2008.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1946/03/x01.htm>.

Cold War even after Stalin's death in 1953. The bureaucratic controls he emplaced remained firmly rooted in the Soviet system even after his successor, Nikita Krushchev, officially denounced Stalin and his purge mentality at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress in February 1956.



Chapter 3

Cold War Foreign Policy

One of the components of the State and Party which Stalin created in his own image was, indeed, the whole momentum of Russian history.

– Robert Conquest, *Russia After Krushchev*

Cold War – Russian Foreign Policy in Eastern European “Near Abroad”

The momentum Stalin created helped shape Soviet actions in Moscow’s East European Near Abroad throughout the Cold War. The intent of this section is to define the Cold War in terms of two overlapping periods which broadly shaped Soviet foreign policy on its vital security periphery bordering Europe until the formal dissolution of the USSR in 1991. During the first period, Stalin succeeded in solidifying territorial and diplomatic gains allowing him to establish and entrench pro-Soviet leaders and communist governments in Eastern Europe. In the second period immediately preceding and following Stalin’s death in 1953, a lengthy period of bi-polar stability with the United States and Western Europe was broadly defined by attempts at détente punctuated by global and Eastern European crises. The Iron Curtain (Figure 3.1) was transformed from a notional idea into a European geopolitical manifestation of the bipolar divide.

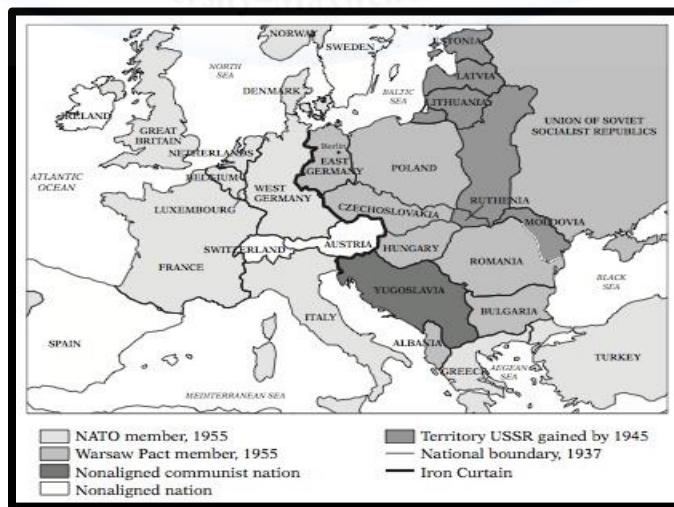


Figure 5: Cold War Europe 1955 – 1991

Source: Reprinted From: Education.com, http://01.education.com/files/265601_265700/265639/file_265639.jpg

Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982 triggered a period of uncertainty within the Soviet political establishment. Following the rapid succession and subsequent deaths of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko between 1982 and 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's inheritance from previous Soviet leaders included a consistent policy of maintaining Warsaw Pact solidarity in Eastern Europe, including the use of military force when Soviet leaders deemed necessary.

This section outlines the crises which occurred in East Germany, Poland, and Hungary between 1953 and 1956. In all three cases, the Soviets used political and military coercion including the actual use of military force to crush the uprising in Hungary in 1956. These early post-Stalin era events foreshadowed the Soviet Union's actions in subsequent crises. The "Brezhnev Doctrine" was introduced vis-a-vis responses to the Czechoslovakian "Prague Spring" of 1968 and the anti-Soviet regime in Afghanistan in 1979. The legacy Stalin and his successors left Boris Yeltsin in the decade after the Soviet Union ceased to exist included a severely weakened Russian state with distrustful former satellites in her Eastern European "Near Abroad."

Stalin and the Early Cold War – 1947-1953

The early Cold War was defined by Soviet actions and reactions to United States' actions after World War II. The early promise of continued agreement between the Allies as outlined first at Yalta in February 1945 faded at the Potsdam conference of July-August 1945. Soviet intentions became increasingly transparent as Stalin pushed for dominance over Poland and the Balkans. Despite his lobbying, Stalin was unable to secure Allied agreement for reparations from Germany, leaving an enduring Soviet bitterness.¹ The events of 1946 and 1947 helped ratify the growing divide between the western camp, led by the United States, and the Soviet camp. Stalin's actions in Eastern Europe grew increasingly aggressive as he tightened Soviet control over Eastern Europe. The use of Soviet-style secret police in Poland and a pro-Soviet prime minister in Romania reinforced Stalin's influence. Yet, he remained restrained in his quest for control of the strategic Bosphorous Straits when, in September 1946, he discovered that

¹ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor In International Relations* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 217.

the US intended to actively defend Turkey in any potential military conflict with the Soviet Union.²

Nevertheless, Stalin initially indicated the potential for compromise with the United States. Even after President Truman proclaimed his new doctrine in a speech in March 1947, Stalin attempted to “continue political ties and negotiations” with the United States. Expressing his position during a 1947 meeting with Secretary of State George C. Marshall, Stalin indicated his overt intention to continue compromising on important European settlement issues. Such efforts were truncated after Marshall outlined his plan for European financial and reconstruction assistance on June 5, 1947.

After this date, Stalin and Foreign Minister Molotov sought to create an alternative to United States’ policies in Europe. In a July meeting of Eastern European communists designed to propose a response to the Marshall Plan, Molotov expressed the Soviet position that the American plan was a method of dividing Europe and undermining “the sovereignty of the continents’ states.”³ In his personal memoirs, Molotov reflected on his belief that resistance to the Marshall Plan was the correct Soviet position.⁴ The reinforcement of Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe subsequently intensified as Soviet leaders sought to prevent the intrusion of Western influence in the region.⁵ Through proxy Communist parties, the Soviets demanded and received governmental and societal acculturation modelled on Soviet society.⁶ Stalin and Molotov formalized the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) as a partial response to the Marshall Plan and a way to ensure assimilation into the Soviet sphere. At the July Cominform 1947 meeting, Molotov expressed neither an imposition of obstacles to perceived American encroachment nor advocated resistance to the Marshall Plan.⁷ This simultaneously indicated Soviet insecurity regarding its post-war status and acknowledged US power in Europe.

² Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 220.

³ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 221.

⁴ Resis, Albert, ed. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics - Conversations with Felix Chuev*. Translated by Ivan R. Dee. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1993), 61.

⁵ Di Biagio, Anna, “The Marshall Plan and the Founding of Cominform: June-September 1947,” in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-1953*, eds. Gori, Francesca, and Silvio Pons, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 210.

⁶ Di Biagio, “The Marshall Plan,” 211.

⁷ Di Biagio, “The Marshall Plan,” 210-211.

At another Cominform meeting in September 1947, Andrei Zhdanov, the Soviet delegate representing the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delineated a separation between the two superpowers. Attended in Warsaw by representatives from Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy and France, this meeting formalized the Cominform as a Moscow control agent for influencing European communists. Zhdanov famously announced the “division of the political forces operating in the international arena into two major camps: the imperialist and anti-democratic camp [led by the United States] and the “anti-imperialist and democratic camp [led by the USSR].”⁸

Stalin’s 1948 Berlin Blockade served as the starker indication of the emerging bipolar global order. Instead of achieving his goals of ousting the U.S., Britain, and France from Berlin, the Soviet action could not overcome the USAF’s airlift which averted humanitarian disaster for West Berliners. The Soviet attempt to avert the creation of an independent and democratic West Germany helped solidify diplomatic, economic, and military pressure against further encroachments into Western Europe. As Roger G. Miller points out, Stalin recognized not only the success of the airlift by December 1948, but likely accepted the “death of his goal of a united Germany.”⁹ The tandem counter-blockade of eastern Germany contributed to the stagnation of the USSR’s zone of occupation under Soviet domination. Soviet actions also reinforced the commitment of the United States to prevent further Soviet projections into Western Europe, bolstering efforts towards creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Soviet blockade was officially lifted in May 1949 but demonstrated the increasing rift between the two camps with German reunification issues left unresolved.

The Growing Divide in Europe

By late 1952, Soviet-backed communist leaders in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary maintained control “through massive expansion of the largely Soviet-controlled

⁸ Zhdanov, Andrei. “Speech at the founding of the Cominform (Communist International Organization), Sep 1947,’ <http://educ.jmu.edu/~vannorwc/assets/ghist%20102-150/pages/readings/zhdanovspeech.html>

⁹ Miller, Roger G. *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 179

security apparatus, mass terror, purges and show trials.”¹⁰ In the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), established after the Berlin Blockade in October 1949, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) implemented forced programs of collectivization and socialization in an attempt to energize economic rejuvenation.¹¹ Weakened by stagnant or eroding popular support across all of Eastern Europe, the GDR was the first of the satellite countries to experience violence at the hands of the Soviet Red Army.

By the early 1950s, Stalin’s imposition of hardline Soviet policies across Eastern Europe were creating widespread food shortages, economic stagnation, and political tension. His death in March 1953 did not alleviate the situation in the Near Abroad despite early Kremlin overtures indicating peaceful intentions towards the United States and President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Soviet offerings signaled an external policy of détente including rapid support for a Korean War truce, easing of air and ground traffic and travel restrictions to Berlin, and relinquishment of Soviet territorial claims in Turkey.¹² Though this peace offensive was positively received by President Eisenhower, the Soviets demonstrated no intention of loosening control over Eastern Europe’s governments and territory. Instead, the new Soviet leaders transmitted orders to all the Eastern European leaders directing implementation of reforms to in an effort to arrest growing economic and political strains.¹³

Chaos Begins – Stalin’s Death and Eastern European Unrest

Soviet control of its Near Abroad East European satellites varied based on a variety of external and internal factors. In East Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia between 1953 and 1968, the Soviets justified massive Red Army intervention to ensure the installation and survival of pro-Communist and pro-Soviet governments. In the other countries of Eastern Europe where such direct military intervention did not take place, the Soviets maintained control through proxy leaders. These leaders, their proxy governments, and their ruthless security organizations coerced their populations

¹⁰ Ostermann, Christian F., ed. *Uprising in East Germany: 1953 - The Cold War, The German Question and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Share Company, 2001), 1.

¹¹ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 1.

¹² Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 4.

¹³ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 15.

commensurate with Soviet guidance. Domestic restrictions on personal and political freedoms provided tinder for the sparks of localized national unrest, highlighting broader Eastern and Central European popular discontent.

Events in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia presaged events in East Germany in 1953. In Bulgaria, tobacco workers went on strike in May 1953 in protest against Soviet-inspired demands for increased industrial and agricultural production which “effectively translated into wage-cuts.” The strikes ceased and further violence averted only when Bulgarian Prime Minister Vulko Chervenko’s resuscitated a formerly-purged yet popular deputy prime minister to calm the situation. In Czechoslovakia, thousands of workers protested against Soviet-imposed monetary reforms resulting in rapid currency devaluation. Beginning on 1 June 1953, protesters marched into the western Czechoslovak city of Plezn’s Republic Square, ransacked the mayor’s office and took control of the city’s public announcement system. For two days, the Czechoslovak Communist Party lost control of the city until the security and military apparatus imposed martial law on the city.¹⁴

The Use of Force – The Soviet Red Army in East Germany, 1953

Despite the aforementioned events, GDR Prime Minister Walter Ulbricht, with Soviet encouragement, continued implementation of plans to anchor East Germany to the Soviet Union as a formal satellite. Beginning with West Germany’s formal alignment with Western Europe and the United States after the May 1952 Bonn and European Defense Community treaties, Ulbricht, a devout Stalin acolyte, steadily implemented political and economic controls on the GDR’s population.¹⁵ State measures included restrictive agricultural collectivization, cessation of most private trade, and revival of heavy industry. Devised to strengthen social and political cohesion, imposition of the measures mimicked Soviet restrictions on civil society, throwing fuel on the dry tinder base. The combined effect placed more stress on the average worker as real wages decreased and food shortages spread. As East Germans fled to West Germany in the spring of 1953, the Soviet Politburo grew increasingly concerned with Ulbricht’s failure to prevent impending chaos.

¹⁴ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 16-17.

¹⁵ Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: A New History*. (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 106.

Just as the Czechoslovakian protests occurred, East German protests grew more widespread following Ulbricht's continued and open support for Stalinist socialist policies including establishment of a GDR national army, tightened border controls to prevent free movement to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany), and enhanced agricultural collectivization efforts. In order to arrest the deteriorating political and economic situation in the GDR, the Kremlin rescinded war reparations payments in April and then halted further collectivization and private business restrictions across the GDR in May.

Summoning Ulbricht and SED leaders to Moscow in early June, the Politburo, including its most aggressive member Beria, informed Ulbricht that his reform measures were not broad enough. The Presidium's broad Eastern European New Course outlined renewed industrial and social reforms without addressing root economic causes, lecturing leaders to curb abuses of power including the use of the secret police. The Soviet proclivity towards the imposition of political and military norms on Eastern European Communist leaders demonstrated itself first in the GDR.¹⁶

Upon his return to Berlin and after four days of SED Politburo meetings, Ulbricht announced plans to continue with previously announced yet poorly received increases in productivity targets. In response, East German workers in Berlin and across other East German cities went on strike, acts culminating in a call for a general strike on 16 June and a 25,000-strong demonstration in Berlin early the morning of 17 June. By late morning, a small group of violent demonstrators forced their way into government buildings, triggering other riots throughout the GDR. In response to this initial Eastern European uprising, the Soviet Red Army responded with "massive military force to suppress the rioting and support the East German regime."¹⁷ As the first post-war response to such unrest, this violent suppression foreshadowed future Soviet aggressive action to forestall potential destabilization on its periphery.

Krushchev's 'Secret Speech' Triggers Polish and Hungarian Unrest

¹⁶ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 18-19.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. "The East German Uprising, 1953," <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/east-german-uprising>

With Nikita Krushchev now firmly in control, the Soviet Union resorted to military interference in the affairs of the countries on its European frontier, if those countries appeared to veer away from official Soviet policy. Krushchev's Secret Speech at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party on 25 February 1956 denounced Stalin's cult of personality and opened the way for limited dissent within the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Krushchev outlined his 'de-Stalinization' policies using scathing language during his lengthy presentation, inspiring inconsistent applause throughout: "Stalin....used extreme methods and mass repressions at a time when the revolution was already victorious, when the Soviet State was strengthened, when the exploiting classes were already liquidated and socialist relations were rooted solidly in all phases of national economy, when our party was politically consolidated and had strengthened itself both numerically and ideologically."¹⁸

The speech triggered immediate demands from the Hungarian and Polish communist parties to release popular communist leaders imprisoned for dissent by Stalin.¹⁹ As economic distress gripped the populations of both countries simultaneously, their leaders chose divergent paths in their interaction with the Soviet Kremlin in addressing internal discord. The Soviet "New Course" was the Kremlin's prescription for introducing reform while maintaining communist, pro-Soviet control. While the use of the Soviet Red Army was threatened in both Poland and Hungary, only the latter experienced Soviet military invasion as a result of leadership decisions shunning the "New Course." A brief discussion is necessary distinguishing Krushchev's decision to avoid such intervention in Poland from subsequent decisions in Hungary.

Polish Unrest and Soviet Decision Not to Intervene

As in Hungary, two distinct groups of communists existed in Poland during Stalin's reign. His death, and Khrushchev's subsequent denunciation of his policies and persona, resulted in a growing divide between Muscovite communists who had stayed in the Soviet Union during WWII and 'home communists' imprisoned in their own countries by Stalin's Muscovites once the war ended. In Poland, another devout Stalinist,

¹⁸ Whitney, Thomas P., ed. *Krushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949-1961*. (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), 217.

¹⁹ Granville, Johanna C. "Reactions to the Events of 1956: New Findings from the Budapest and Warsaw Archives." *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (April 2003): 261-90, 263.

Boleslaw Beirut, remained in power until his death in March 1956. As popular fear increased while state control waned after his death, economic distress intensified by the summer of 1956. The Polish transitional government proved unable to cope with emergent bouts of violence even as another Stalinist, Wladyslaw Gomulka, was released from prison and wheeled onto the Polish leadership pedestal.²⁰

On 23 June 1956, thousands of workers revolted in Poznan, Poland, demanding increased pay, among other labor-related reforms. As the crowd grew, the workers seized the city jail, freeing prisoners and capturing weapons. After storming the local radio station, demonstrations rapidly blossomed into full-blown anti-government riots, expanding to other Polish towns and cities. The pro-government Polish military eventually quashed the uprisings, killing as many as 73 protestors.²¹ In an editorial published in the Polish daily newspaper *Trybuna Ludu*, on 30 June 1956, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Jozef Cyrankiewicz justified the use of government violence against the protesters. Identifying “murderous provocations and bloody riots” as the root cause, he emphasized the heroism of the Polish army and security forces’ response based on their “defense of life and property of the citizens and to restore peace.”²² The Soviet Presidium endorsed Polish actions in an editorial published on July 1, 1956 by labeling the protestors as “hostile agents,” identified as “imperialist and reactionary Polish underground agents.”²³

Nevertheless, the protests underscored the weakening of the interim leader, Edward Ochab, who unsuccessfully implemented reforms modelled on the tried and failed Soviet New Course. Acknowledging his weakness, he implemented nationwide political reforms as the ranks of party and trade unions swelled. In late August, “over a million Polish citizens convened” at a holy shrine demanding a reevaluation of Polish-Soviet economic and political arrangements.²⁴ Ameliorating the immediate threat of

²⁰ Curry, Jane L. “Poland: The Politics of ‘God’s Playground’” in Wolchik, Sharon L., and Jane L. Curry, eds. *Central and East European Politics: From Communism to Democracy*. Second. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2011), 307.

²¹ Granville, “Reactions to Events of 1956,” 264.

²² Cyrankiewicz, Jozef. “Proclamation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Cyrankiewicz, to the People of Poznan, June 29, 1956,” in *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe: A Selection of Documents on Events in Poland and Hungary - February-November, 1956*, Zinner, Paul E., ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1956), 131-136.

²³ Soviet Reaction, “Polish People Brand Organizers of Provocation”, *Pravda*, 1 July 1956 in Zinner, 136.

²⁴ Granville, “Reactions to Events of 1956,” 266.

violence, Ochab first reinstated Gomulka to the Polish United Worker's Party (PZPR, the primary communist party) then advocated for Gomulka's election as the PZPR First Secretary at its Eighth Plenum on 19 October 1956.²⁵

Just as that session was slated to begin, Krushchev directed the Soviet Army to advance on Warsaw to instill fear in Poland's leadership while Polish military forces loyal to Gomulka simultaneously assumed a defensive posture in the city. Unexpectedly, Krushchev, Vyacheslav Molotov and a coterie of high-power Presidium members flew to Warsaw for face-to-face discussions with Gomulka and Ochab. During these discussions, Krushchev "shook his finger crudely under Gomulka's nose and shouted" that the Soviet Red Army was "ready for active intervention."²⁶ In response, Gomulka expressed his displeasure with Soviet Army movements in Poland and "emphasized [he] would not permit [Polish] independence to be taken away" but that he desired continued Soviet military presence and continued Soviet-Polish cooperation.²⁷

Despite the heated atmosphere, the Soviet CPSU released a memo at the end of the discussions, emphasizing "further strengthening the political and economic cooperation between the Polish People's Republic and the Soviet Union."²⁸ In his own lengthy speech reporting the outcome of the discussions to his own PZPR, Gomulka calmed building pressure within Poland. Breaking definitively from Cyrankiewicz's justification for violence based on the presence of imperialist "agents and provocateurs," Gomulka professed humility and blamed the "profound dissatisfaction of the entire working class" on "the leadership in the Party, in the Government." Continuing, he outlined extensive reform policies emphasizing the rationale behind continued demands for increased agricultural and industrial production. Most importantly, he catered to his Soviet benefactors, professing the importance of the "development of inter-Party and interstate relations with our great fraternal neighbor – the CPSU and the Soviet Union."²⁹

²⁵ "Commuque on the Reinstatement of Wladyslaw Gomulka as Member of the PUWP, August 4, 1956," In Zinner, 187-192.

²⁶ Granville, "Reaction to Events of 1966," 266.

²⁷ Novotny, "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October 1956, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary," in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 5 (Spring 1995): 53-56, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bulletin-no-5-spring-1995>

²⁸ "Commuque on Talks between Party Delegations of the Soviet Union and Poland, October 20, 1956," in Zinner, 196-7.

²⁹ Gomulka, Wladyslaw, "Address by Wladyslaw Gomulka Before the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party, October 20, 1956," in Zinner, 197-231.

In short, Gomulka successfully balanced the necessity for internal national calm while touting his advocacy for continued strong Polish-Soviet relations.

Back in Moscow on the eve of a hastily arranged summit to confer with other Eastern European communist leaders on 24 October, Krushchev provided Gomulka with assurances that Soviet troops would be pulled back.³⁰ Acknowledging Poland's dire economic situation based on shortages of grain and the poor condition of the coal mining industry, Krushchev removed the threat of force as an option and endorsed Gomulka's reform plan. In Krushchev's view, Poland with Gomulka as his trusted agent "now adopted a course...[to] eliminate the unpleasant state of affairs."³¹ Gomulka accepted and indeed invited Soviet advisors to remain in Poland alongside the Polish military.

The Use of Force – The Soviet Red Army in Hungary, 1956

Similar to Ochab, Hungarian leader Matyas Rakosi lived in Moscow during WWII and remained a stalwart Kremlin loyalist. When the war was over, he earned a reputation as one of the cruelest leaders in Eastern Europe for his notorious repression and brutality.³² As part of the fall-out from the crack-down in East Germany in 1953, the Soviet Presidium attempted to curb Rakosi's grip on power through brokerage of a power-sharing arrangement. Establishing Imre Nagy as the new Prime Minister, the Soviets encouraged revival of the "New Course" just as attempted in the GDR and Poland.

The unique political dynamics in Hungary doomed Nagy's reinstatement to failure. His attempts to resuscitate industrial production with an emphasis on consumer goods while slowing agricultural collectivization failed based on Rakosi's sabotage.³³ Discord within the general population grew over maintenance of the 'big four' communist leaders including Rakosi and Erno Gero as more New Course policies failed to prevent the general population's economic deprivation.

As in Poland, Krushchev's 'Secret Speech' hastened a widening of the rift between Hungarian Muscovites (led by Rakosi, Gero and Nagy) and the 'home

³⁰ Granville, "Reactions to Unrest of 1956," 267.

³¹ Kramer, Mark. "Hungary and Poland, 1956: Khrushchev's CPCU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, October 24, 1956," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 5 (Spring 1995): 50–56, 54.

³² Granville, *The Last Domino*, ("Bald Murderer"), 268; Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 543.

³³ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 543.

communists' (including Janos Kadar). Bolstered by the failure of the New Course, the home communists steadily gained popularity.³⁴ Criticism of the Rakosi government intensified and public gatherings expanded to voice public dissent, incited by a group of young oppositionists, the Petofi Circle. Rakosi unsuccessfully attempted to calm dissent, apologizing through a massive public re-interment ceremony for the 1949 Stalinist trial and execution of the popular home communist leader, Laszlo Rajk.

In July 1956, Krushchev directed Presidium-faithful Anastas Mikoyan to travel to Budapest after the Soviet ambassador there reported the imminence of revolution unless Rakosi was removed.³⁵ Replacing Rakosi with another hard-liner, Erno Gero, only exacerbated the political situation as he maintained Rakosi's hardline policies, arresting and incarcerating Imre Nagy. While Ochab advocated a reformist agenda similar to Gomulka's and acceptable to Krushchev, Rakosi selected Gero and avoided reform. On the morning of 23 October, the Hungarian daily newspaper *Szabad Nep* carried the text of Gomulka's 20 October speech to the PZPR sparking a largely peaceful Polish student protest near the Polish Embassy in Budapest later that morning.

As the day progressed, the Budapest demonstration grew widespread and volatile, triggering a series of actions and reactions by the Hungarian leaders and the Soviet Presidium. The demonstration reportedly swelled to "more than two hundred thousand" as they began marching through Budapest to the Parliament building.³⁶ As part of the demonstrations, the protestors desecrated a monument of Stalin and openly displayed Hungarian flags with the Communist logo removed.³⁷ In a vain attempt to calm the rapidly spreading protests, Gero broadcast a radio address to the nation that evening.

Unlike Gomulka's exhortations to the Polish public that resulted in calm, Gero professed unity between the Hungarian Worker's Party and the Soviet Union and called for opposition to "any attempt at creating disorder, nationalist well-poisoning, and provocation." Calling on workers to continue sacrificing for the national and socialist good, Gero made little mention of reform efforts. In an important contextual note

³⁴ Granville, *The Last Domino*, 269.

³⁵ Talbott, Strobe, ed. *Krushchev Remembers*. Translated by Talbott, Strobe. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 415.

³⁶ Talbott, Strobe, ed. *Krushchev Remembers*. Translated by Talbott, Strobe. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 415.

³⁷ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 544.

provided with the text of this speech, Paul E. Zinner indicated that “even while Gero spoke the tumult in the streets became aggravated.”³⁸ The national political atmosphere grew superheated over the next 24 hours as protestors demanded Gero’s dismissal and the unconditional removal of all Soviet troops from Hungary. As violence intensified, protestors stormed the radio station adjacent to Parliament. In response, Gero ordered loyalist Hungarian security and military personnel to take the station, resulting in the deaths of several students.

In Moscow, at the same 23-24 October 1956 Presidium meeting during which Krushchev voiced support for Gomulka in Poland, he questioned the policies of Gero and his Prime Minister Andras Hegedus. After a series of communications between Gero and Krushchev in which the former requested Soviet military support, Soviet Marshal Georgii Zhukov ordered the mobilization of five Soviet divisions to stamp out the revolt in Budapest.³⁹ The Soviet Red Army commenced Operation *Volna* (Wave) on 24 October with units arriving in Budapest late that morning. These units supplemented the two divisions previously stationed in the center of the country. Litvan postulates that the Soviets estimated, as in East Germany in 1953, that the mere threat of force would deter further violence.⁴⁰ Even though Gero re-instated Nagy as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, his request for Soviet military intervention was now well underway.⁴¹

Nagy addressed the student demonstrators in the square adjacent to Parliament but disappeared from the scene through 24 October. Nagy, “belatedly put forward by Mikoyan and Suslov [Krushchev’s on-scene Presidium representatives],” remained unable to control the violence despite imposition of martial law on 24 October. Krushchev again dispatched Presidium members Mikoyan and Suslov to Budapest the same day, demanding Gero’s resignation but withholding public announcement until the following day. Mikoyan and Suslov directly berated Gero for provoking Hungarian popular revolt during his emotive October 23 speech, keeping the CPSU Presidium in Moscow apprised of the deteriorating situation.

³⁸ Gero, Erno. “Radio Address by Erno Gero, First Secretary of the Hungarian Worker’s Part, October 23, 1956.” In Zinner, 402-407.

³⁹ Granville, Johanna C. *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2004), 62.

⁴⁰ Litvan, Gyorgy, ed. *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953-1963* (London and New York: Longman Singapore Publishers Ltd, 1996), 63.

⁴¹ Granville, *The First Domino*, 270.

By mid-morning 25 October, the peaceful demonstrators began “shouting ‘Down with Gero!’” while openly socializing with mobilized Soviet troops posted in the square since the morning of 24 October.⁴² There are differing historical accounts of whether Soviet Army troops or Hungarian special police on the rooftops of surrounding buildings began shooting first. As Litvan records in his account of the revolt, the Soviet Army’s initial movements and reactions during the evolving early crisis indicate these forces were not under any orders to attack.⁴³ Yet, sometime mid-morning on 25 October, Hungarian security personnel and the Soviet tank crews exchanged gunfire with protestors caught in the middle. Regardless of who started shooting, “Bloody Thursday,” 25 October 1956, resulted in “between 120 and 234 citizens” killed.⁴⁴ This touched off further violence perpetrated by small armed groups attacking the Soviet units throughout Budapest as violence spread throughout the rest of the country through 28 October.

In Krushchev’s own recounting of the events, the Soviets “decided to pull our troops out of Budapest and to station them at the airfield outside the city.”⁴⁵ Granville’s analysis reveals that the Soviets likely realized the “initial intervention on 23-24 October...exacerbated the situation,” opting to withdraw and regroup.⁴⁶ Nagy issued a flurry of reform measures including introduction of a multiparty system and calls for cease-fires including Soviet troop withdrawal. Simultaneously, Mikoyan and Suslov removed Gero as the HWP Secretary and installed the more moderate Janos Kadar as the Prime Minister. Kadar called for a ceasefire in a radio address on 25 October to little avail.⁴⁷ Telegraphing the justification for further use of force, the Soviet Presidium released a statement on 30 October intended for all Eastern European satellite countries. The statement announced the Soviet military presence in Hungary as a response to an invitation by the legal [pro-Soviet] Kadar government and forecast the necessity for continued engagement to prevent further destabilization by other unspecified nefarious

⁴² Granville, *The First Domino*, 63.

⁴³ Litvan, Gyorgy, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, 63.

⁴⁴ Granville, *The First Domino*, 63.

⁴⁵ Krushchev in Talbott, *Krushchev Remembers*, 417.

⁴⁶ Granville, *The First Domino*, 271.

⁴⁷ Kadar, Jonas. “Radio Appeal by Janos Kadar Asking for an End of the Fighting, October 25, 1956.” In Zinner, 415.

actors.⁴⁸ Sporadic fighting continued as Soviet military units withdrew and regrouped within Hungary.

Nagy, attempting to prevent further domestic revolt, delivered a radio address nation-wide on 1 November declaring Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, a defensive alliance instituted by the USSR in May 1955.⁴⁹ In response, the Soviets launched a much larger second invasion, Operation *Vikhr* (Whirlwind) on 4 November with an overwhelming force consisting of 17 Soviet divisions with over sixty thousand military personnel (Figure 3.1).⁵⁰ As preparation for the invasion, the Soviets flew Kadar and one of his key deputies, Ferenc Munnich, to Moscow on 1 November to ensure they would support a pro-Soviet stance.

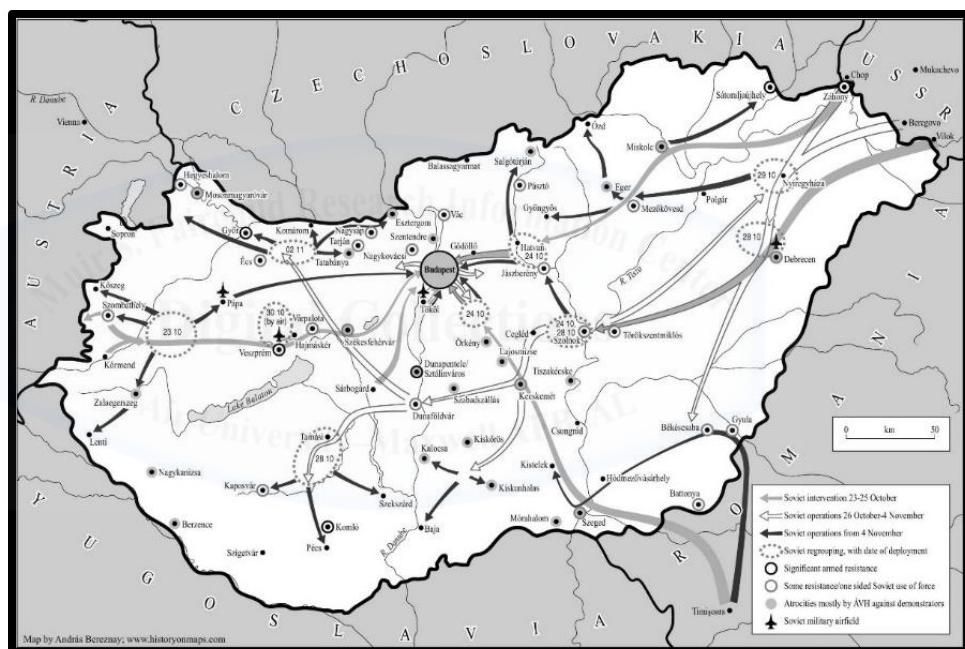


Figure 6: Soviet Union's Military Invasion of Hungary, 1956

Source: Reprinted From: Revised from HistoryOnMaps.com,
<http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Ungarn/Hungary%201956.jpg>

⁴⁸ "Declaration of the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States, October 30, 1956." http://www.cvce.eu/obj/declaration_by_the_soviet_government_moscow_30_october_1956-en-0876cc2c-5d0c-414f-8a18-966b8350d514.html

⁴⁹ Nagy, Imre. "Radio Address to the Nation by Imre Nagy Proclaiming the Neutrality of Hungary, November 1, 1956," in Zinner, 463.

⁵⁰ Granville, *The First Domino*, 95.

As the invasion commenced, Nagy was provided exile in the Yugoslavian embassy based on an arrangement between Yugoslavia's Josef Broz Tito and Krushchev. The agreement provided Nagy free passage to Romania by all sides once fighting stopped. Despite the Soviet assurances to Tito, Nagy and his group were kidnapped by Soviet forces with the Kadar government's full complicity as soon as they exited the embassy and boarded a bus.⁵¹ Instead of releasing Nagy as previously arranged with Tito, Soviet agents escorted him to the KGB compound, kept him there overnight, and then flew him to Romania. The removal of Nagy served as a reminder to other Warsaw Pact members: divestiture from the Soviet alliance would not be tolerated.

Widespread fighting between rebels, the Soviet Army, and pro-Kadar forces continued until approximately 6 November when the Soviet commander placed Budapest under military administration. Pockets of resistance continued to hold out in the capital and elsewhere until approximately 11 November. Official estimates of Hungarians killed between 23 October and 11 November vary, but at least 2,700 died in Budapest and other cities with many more likely in the countryside. Hungary was firmly back in the Warsaw Pact. In his own words, as one would expect, Krushchev sustained his belief that the invasion was a Soviet necessity: "By helping the Hungarian people to crush the counterrevolutionary mutiny we have prevented the enemy from impairing the unity of the entire Socialist camp, rigorously tested during the Hungarian events. We were aware that by helping Hungary to suppress the uprising and eliminate its aftermath as quickly as possible we were also helping all the other countries in the Socialist camp."⁵²

From a United States perspective, events in Poland and Hungary did not go unnoticed. While the United States monitored events in Eastern Europe, the Suez Crisis unfolded at virtually the same time. In response to Egyptian President Abdel Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal in the summer of 1956 after a dispute over funding for the Aswan High Dam project, Great Britain, France and the United States engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to re-open the canal. As Granville records, just as the Russian invasion of Hungary began, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles received

⁵¹ Granville, *The First Domino*, 113.

⁵² Krushchev, Nikita in Talbott, Strobe, ed. *Krushchev Remembers*. Translated by Talbott, Strobe. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 428-9.

indications that the United Kingdom might use force against Egypt. This necessitated President Eisenhower's gravitation to this crisis in support of traditional U.S. allies. With regard to Soviet intentions, "Eisenhower had not ruled out the possibility that the Kremlin would use nuclear weapons to prevent their loss of the Eastern European states."⁵³ In a speech on 27 October, Dulles emphasized that the U.S. did not consider the Eastern European states as allies, indicating the U.S. would only offer economic aid if requested. He subsequently cabled the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow and informed him to personally communicate these points to Krushchev and Zhukov. By not acting directly in the Soviet sphere, it is conceivable that the United States tacitly allowed the Soviets a freer hand in taking action within a subservient Communist state.

Hungary - Harbinger for Czechoslovakia (1968)

Soviet military and diplomatic actions in East Germany, Poland and Hungary helped shape Soviet responses to later crises in its near abroad. Stalin's legacy in Eastern Europe consisted of pro-Soviet, communist governments with limited inclination to act independently of the Soviet Union in areas of political reform, economic revitalization or military security. Krushchev's denunciations of Stalin's cult of personality did not translate to a loosening of Soviet control over WWII territories or their pro-Soviet governments.

Two key Soviet leaders instrumental to the Soviet response to the Hungarian uprisings proved instrumental in addressing later unrest in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. Leonid Brezhnev, dispatched to Budapest on 3 November, kept the Kremlin in direct communications with the surrogate Hungarian government as the second Warsaw Pact invasion commenced.⁵⁴ Similar to Krushchev's removal or marginalization of Politburo rivals, Brezhnev consolidated power through his Politburo allies and then voted to remove Krushchev from office in 1963. Another of Brezhnev's contemporaries in the Hungarian crisis also shaped Soviet foreign policy through much of the Cold War.

Yuri Andropov served as the Soviet Union's ambassador to Hungary from 1954 until after the Soviets crushed the revolt in the second military invasion in early

⁵³ Granville, *The First Domino*, 64.

⁵⁴ Granville, *The First Domino*, 97.

November 1956. After the Hungarian revolution, Andropov returned to the Soviet Union, serving as head of the KGB (Russian *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*; translates to Committee for State Security). While Krushchev and Brezhnev's ascension to power were largely based on consolidation of power within the Politburo, Andropov rose quickly and without contention. When Brezhnev passed away in November 1982, following a period of numerous illnesses, Andropov succeeded him. Ironically, the "cult of personality" scorned by Krushchev shortly after Stalin's death became a hallmark trait of the later Brezhnev years, facilitating Andropov's quick succession.

The trend of Soviet actions in Eastern Europe from Krushchev through Andropov remained consistently focused on maintaining the Warsaw Pact, comprised of Soviet-sponsored governments. The alliance effectively served as the buffer zone between the USSR and Western Europe. But, fissures emerged in the alliance as domestic economies faltered, allowing potentially uncontrollable social and political forces to root themselves. Just as in Poland and Hungary in the mid-1950s, Czechoslovakia suffered from recession and food shortages by 1962, forcing the Czech government to attempt reformation. By late 1967, Brezhnev was acutely aware that domestic problems plagued the Czech government led by Antonin Novotny. In a brief visit to Prague to discuss potential reform options, Brezhnev discussed the situation with Novotny's deputies, Jiri Hendrych and Alexander Dubcek. Hendrych, to that point Novotny's staunchest ally in the Slovak Communist Party, informed Brezhnev that removing Novotny and installing Hendrych himself might present a way forward. Dubcek, on the other hand, informed Brezhnev of the deeply rooted social, economic, and political issues afflicting the country along with Novotny's resistance to any further course corrections.⁵⁵ As a result, Brezhnev lost confidence in Novotny. In a series of subsequent Czechoslovak Presidium meetings, Dubcek was elevated to First Secretary of the Presidium, replacing Novotny in January 1968. Dubcek almost immediately introduced reforms, including relaxation of media censorship, tacit approval of unofficial political clubs and the removal of some Communist officials.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Dubcek, Alexander. *Hope Dies Last*. Edited and translated by Jiri Hochman. (New York, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International, 1993), 121-122.

⁵⁶ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 566-567.

Dubcek's attempt to introduce "socialism with a human face" translated to political and cultural revitalization in one of the most repressed Eastern European countries. Dubcek's reform efforts were neither accepted nor well-received by the Soviet Union or its two most devout Eastern European allies, the GDR and Poland (still led in 1968 by Ulbricht and Gomulka, respectively).⁵⁷ Between February and March 1968, Dubcek introduced reforms, unintentionally permitting dissent through provision of new freedoms to the general population, thus eliciting a Kremlin protestation.⁵⁸ Yet, unlike Poland and Hungary in 1956, the rejuvenation of political, economic, and cultural life remained largely peaceful through the Prague Spring of 1968.

This, however, did not stop Ulbricht, Gomulka, Andropov and Brezhnev from drawing parallels to the 1956 Hungarian revolt. In a 15 March 1968 CPSU Politburo meeting in Moscow, Andropov, as head of the KGB, and CPSU General Secretary Brezhnev agreed that Dubcek was allowing the situation to become uncontrollable, thereby threatening the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe. In a telephone call after the meeting, Brezhnev warned Dubcek that his actions were leading to a situation reminiscent of the events leading to the Soviet army's invasion of Hungary in 1956.⁵⁹ Ulbricht and Gomulka vociferously called for Soviet military intervention, fearing Czech reforms could endanger their own grip on power in the GDR and Poland. Brezhnev harbored fears that intellectuals and students within the Soviet Union would revolt if the situation deteriorated in Czechoslovakia.

By May 1968, Brezhnev directed creation of an invasion plan telegraphed by large military maneuvers around Czechoslovakia's borders in May 1968 and Warsaw Pact exercises on Czechoslovakian territory itself in June 1968. Rather than calming dissent amongst the general Czech population, the exercises fueled anti-Soviet resentment.⁶⁰ The Prague Spring was in full blossom at this point with Dubcek continuing to appease the Soviets while stalling on further rollback of reforms.

⁵⁷ Bischof, Gunter, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 39.

⁵⁸ Severo, Richard. "Alexander Dubcek, 70, Dies in Prague." New York Times, November 8, 1992. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/08/world/alexander-dubcek-70-dies-in-prague.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>

⁵⁹ Bischof, et al., *Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact*, 40.

⁶⁰ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 567.

In his memoirs, Dubcek accepted that many experts assigned two opposite conclusions for the reasons behind the Prague Spring: “One group of authors says I moved too slowly, and the other says I moved too fast....My problem was not having a crystal ball to foresee the Russian invasion. At no point between January and August 20 [1968], in fact, did I believe that it would happen.”⁶¹ The Soviet military exercises within and just beyond Czechoslovakia indicated otherwise. Despite the exercises and numerous personal consultations and telephone discussions with Brezhnev, Dubcek consistently voiced his position that the “existing political system did not fit [Czech] circumstances.” Instead, he offered critical exposition on Stalinism as the “root of stagnation and the current crisis” based on “a self-deceptive arrogance in relation to other countries.”⁶² Realizing Dubcek’s entrenched position, Brezhnev ordered the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In contrast to the large-scale, unilateral Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the 20 August 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia consisted of Warsaw Pact troops from Hungary, East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria, already well-positioned based on the earlier military exercises.⁶³ The occupation of Prague and other population centers was completed along with the arrest of reformist leaders within a day. Despite the invasion, Dubcek remained in power, though significantly weakened, until the Soviets replaced him with the more conservative, pro-Soviet Gustav Husak.⁶⁴ The reforms precipitating the Prague Spring steadily evaporated with further dissent suppressed. Czechoslovakia once again became a compliant member of the Warsaw Pact.⁶⁵

The invasion of Czechoslovakia represented the manifestation of Soviet foreign policy later known as the “Brezhnev Doctrine.” During a November 1968 presentation to Communist Polish workers, Brezhnev justified the use of military force as a necessary response to maintaining the integrity of the Warsaw Pact.⁶⁶ The Brezhnev Doctrine

⁶¹ Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last*, 128.

⁶² Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last*, 134.

⁶³ U.S. Department of State, “Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia,” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/soviet-invasion-czechoslovakia>

⁶⁴ Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 569.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia,” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/soviet-invasion-czechoslovakia>

⁶⁶ Brezhnev, Leonid. “Modern History Sourcebook: the Brezhnev Doctrine, 1968” <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1968brezhnev.asp>

essentially reinforced the integrity of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe regardless of whether reform turned violent (as in Hungary) or remained peaceful (as in Czechoslovakia). Additionally, the doctrine served as an articulation of the Soviet intention to maintain absolute political and economic control of its Warsaw Pact affiliates as well as security on its periphery.



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Chapter 4

Russia's Transitional Decade – 1991 - 2000

Observers will argue for years to come over whether Yeltsin could have created a genuine democracy in Russia. Let us consider three factors that affected Russia's development in the 1990s: its historical legacy, the institutional obstacles to the transformation process, and the role of the leader and behavior of the elite.

– Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia Lost In Transition*

The USSR Collapses – Yeltsin's Rise as Putin's Crisis

Even as early as December 1981, the USSR's Politburo decided not to intervene further militarily in any of its European satellites using military force. In contrast to Brezhnev's advocacy for military intervention in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, the rise of the Polish *Solidarity* party was handled quite differently. As the first “independent self-governing trade union ever in the Marxist-Leninist world,” *Solidarity*'s charismatic leader Lech Walesa gained the tacit endorsement of Pope John Paul II, a Pole. Demanding political and economic reform of the Soviet-backed Polish government, Walesa invited a potential Soviet response through organization of labor rallies in the Gdansk, Poland shipyards. While the Soviet Union attempted to pressure the Polish leadership to take actions against the protestors, Brezhnev decided not intervene militarily. This signaled a shift in Soviet policy to soft power instruments designed to coerce or convince Warsaw Pact members to maintain internal stability in order to preserve the alliance. For Brezhnev, securing the alliance as the top priority translated to restraint on the use of military force. Bogged down in a resource-intensive war in Afghanistan with no end in sight and the potential for imperial overreach closer to Russia's sensitive European periphery, Brezhnev decided against antagonizing the United States and the new U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

Unlike the uprising caused by reformers at the top of the Czech government in 1968 that triggered Soviet military intervention, the uprising in Poland was instigated from the bottom-up as a general uprising by a larger segment of the Polish population

against instruments of the state generally, and the Polish communist party specifically.¹ In December 1981, rather than introducing force in accordance with the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Soviet Politburo decided unequivocally not to intervene. This stark departure from earlier interventions, dating back to the 1953 East German uprisings, effectively ended employment of the Brezhnev Doctrine to preserve the Soviet Union's sphere of influence in its Near Abroad. Instead, the Soviets postured the Red Army as if they would invade Poland, triggering Polish imposition of martial law to stave off potential invasion. Convincing Polish leader, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, of their intent to enter the country, Jaruzelski acquiesced through his cunning imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981, arresting Walesa and other key *Solidarity* leaders.² In contrast to other Eastern European leaders, Jaruzelski deftly prevented Soviet invasion by convincing Brezhnev of his intention to prevent further destabilization. *Solidarity* organizers were forced underground until 1989 but nevertheless remained active through support from "Western labor organizations and Polish émigré groups."³

On the eve of Brezhnev's death in November 1982, the U.S.S.R. remained entrenched in the stalemated Afghanistan war. Closer to home, polities within Eastern and Central European satellites increasingly resented Soviet imposition of economic and political restrictions enhanced by locally compliant Communist party apparatus. Complicating matters internally, global oil prices tumbled, weakening an already-shaky Soviet economy.⁴ Brezhnev's death initiated a CPSU leadership crisis.

Before his death, Brezhnev recognized the necessity for domestic reforms, but the Politburo proved unable to offer anything reminiscent of market-level reform. As a result, CPSU party members debated whether the system could be reformed at all. Once Andropov succeeded Brezhnev in November 1982, he, himself, was too aged and frail to influence the changes needed in the faltering Soviet system though he did introduce "some basis for change." Andropov, the oldest CPSU leader in the U.S.S.R.'s history, realized his days were numbered and groomed Gorbachev as his replacement. Yet,

¹ Kramer, Mark. "Cold War Crises: Poland 1980-1981, Soviet Policy During the Polish Crisis." *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 5 (Spring 1995): 116–39.

² Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: A New History*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 20050, 221-222.

³ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, 1989," (31 October 2013), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/fall-of-communism>

⁴ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 224.

because of Politburo infighting, once Andropov died, another septuagenarian replaced him instead. Konstantin Chernenko, appearing frail even at Andropov's funeral in February 1984, remained withdrawn from public view until his death on 10 March 1985.

Gorbachev's Rise - Reforms invite Dissent in Eastern Europe

Yet, the Cold War "showed no signs of ending" even with the promise of a new and charismatic leader. Until 1985, foreign and defense ministers Andrey Gromyko and Dmitry Ustinov adhered to intractable international security policies aimed primarily at gaining parity with the United States through increased defense spending.⁵ With Chernenko's death in March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded him as the final CPSU leader in the USSR's history.⁶

At the age of fifty-four, Gorbachev was the youngest man to ascend to leadership of the Soviet Union since Stalin's reign of terror. The Politburo he inherited was still full of Brezhnevites, and the CPSU had no answers for fixing the flagging Soviet domestic situation or political crises beginning in its European sphere of influence. In his memoirs, the evening before his Politburo appointment, Gorbachev informed his wife Raisa that "we can't go on living like this."⁷ Yet, just as all of his predecessors were forced to do since Stalin's death in 1953, the first task Gorbachev faced was consolidation of his position on the Politburo.

Even as the conditions on the Soviet periphery deteriorated into 1985, Gorbachev focused initially on domestic reforms with very little of substance related to his foreign policy intentions.⁸ As a protégé of Andropov, Gorbachev adopted some of his reformist tendencies. Beginning in April 1985, he appointed members of the 'Andropov coalition' as full Politburo members including Yegor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov and Viktor Chebrikov while forcing his most formidable Brezhnevite opponent, Grigori Romanov, into retirement. Gorbachev appointed Ryzhkov as Prime Minister and as Moscow party boss, Boris Yeltsin. As part of these efforts, one of his fateful decisions from a foreign

⁵ Brown in Brown, Archie, and Shevtsova, Lilia, eds. *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin: Political Leadership in Russia's Transition*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001), 17.

⁶ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 229.

⁷ Gorbachev, Mikhail as quoted in Hoffman, David E. *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy*. 1st Anchor Books ed. New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2010), 187.

⁸ Young, John W. *Cold War Europe 1945-1991: A Political History*. 2d Ed. (London: Arnold: Hodder Headline Group, 1996), 225.

policy perspective was the replacement of the Foreign Minister party hardliner Andrey Gromyko with a key ally, Eduard Shevardnadze.

Unlike his ailing predecessors, Gorbachev quickly adopted an approachable manner through frequent public appearances and readiness to answer questions.⁹ His introduction of *novoe myshlenie* (new thinking) included *glasnost* (openness or transparency), designed to facilitate open, critical discussion within Soviet society, coupled with *perestroika* (reconstruction), emphasizing Soviet societal re-structuring. These terms all became well-known monikers for his internal reform efforts. These reforms aimed at providing limited social freedoms while improving management, introducing new technology, emphasizing work discipline, and correcting social ills such as alcoholism and corruption. Domestically, such reforms were received with lukewarm approval by a Soviet public still burdened with flat wages while being asked to work harder and smarter. By early 1986, growing Communist party and public criticism targeted Gorbachev for his *glasnost* policies, fomenting criticism of institutions and policies in Soviet newspapers.

At the Twenty-Seventh Communist Party Congress of February-March 1986, Gorbachev made no denunciation of Brezhnev's policies or cult of personality as Krushchev had done of Stalin's in 1956. Instead, he introduced a plan for the 1986-90 timeframe which suggested continuation of formulaic Soviet centralized economic planning with added worker incentives for increased labor production.¹⁰ As such, Gorbachev required popular support with the realization that he could not use Stalin-style coercion. Instead, he emphasized political reform, beginning with release of renowned dissidents.

In 1987, Gorbachev, still a devout Communist, introduced limited elections for mid-level managers while retaining Soviet central planning, absent price reforms, against the arguments of Boris Yeltsin. As Yeltsin increased his calls for public involvement in the political process and for liberal economic policies, Gorbachev dismissed him from the Politburo. As one of the first unintended consequences of *glasnost*, this actually allowed Yeltsin to capitalize on his popular support while affording him the ability to stay

⁹ Young, *Cold War Europe*, 226.

¹⁰ Young, *Cold War Europe*, 227.

politically relevant, even if temporarily marginalized. Gorbachev had come to power in 1985 as a communist reformer; his introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* actually fostered steady societal liberalization between 1985 and 1987.¹¹ While not his intention, he created a domestic environment conducive to encouraging the social and political discord that would eventually undermine the CPSU.

Beginning in 1988, Gorbachev put in motion the wheels of change, eventually leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. During preparations for the Nineteenth Party Congress of the CPSU, he advocated for elections to a new legislature. Utilizing his full authority as general secretary to consolidate his power within the Politburo, Gorbachev simultaneously marginalized attempts by regional leaders to prevent opposition.¹² His rivals included the previous Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, among others, who supported an “anti-perestroika manifesto” written by staunch pro-CPSU journalist Nina Andreyeva in March 1988. Gorbachev countered opposition to reforms by steadily transferring political power “from party to state institutions” between 1988 and 1989. His reforms within the party resulted in a “Soviet political system” which “changed fundamentally.”¹³

In addition to governmental reforms, Gorbachev implemented changes which weakened the Soviet command economy as early as 1986. Introduction of the Law of Individual Labor Activity in 1986, the Law on the Enterprise in 1987, the Law on Co-operatives of 1988 and the Law on Leaseholds in 1989 contributed to steady privatization of business interests even before the Soviet Union’s dissolution. Yet, Gorbachev likely envisioned a “mixed ownership economy and one with a market” controlled by the state *apparat* rather than a market economy modelled on “American capitalism.”¹⁴

Between 1988 and 1990, Gorbachev’s internal political reforms introduced “political pluralism....institutionalized through contested elections and enthusiastically supported by sections of the mass media.”¹⁵ These efforts at *perestroika* were aimed at building a “reformed and democratized socialism” within the Soviet Union. From a foreign policy perspective, Gorbachev reached out to the United States and the West in

¹¹ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 13.

¹² Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 14.

¹³ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 14.

¹⁴ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 16.

¹⁵ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 13.

general in order to achieve “rapprochement and reconciliation.” Yet, the events about to unfold in Eastern Europe were “notably neglected in Gorbachev’s foreign policy.”¹⁶ Along with key Politburo ideologue Alexander Yakovlev and Sheverdnadze, Gorbachev consistently informed Eastern European leaders of the need to modify “their traditionalist policies.” Their failure to “follow advice from Moscow” resulted a steady devolution of Soviet influence and “domination in Central and Eastern Europe” as early as the mid-1980s.¹⁷ Instead, Gorbachev’s team focused more on foreign policy initiatives aimed at improving relations with the United States and the West.

Gorbachev and his closest advisors neither implemented nor articulated any “new policy for Eastern Europe.”¹⁸ Instead, they emphasized that they would not support Eastern European communist leaders through imposition of Soviet military force as the Brezhnev Doctrine previously required. Gorbachev’s policies carried the unintended consequence of weakening the CPSU. As a result, Soviet centralized control over Eastern Europe diminished even as Gorbachev called on the satellites to reform in order to save their regimes from stagnation and popular unrest. Gorbachev emphasized Western-oriented détente far more than the dealing with the issues facing leaders in the European Near Abroad.¹⁹ As Moscow’s neglect of the countries within the Soviet Bloc continued into 1988, Eastern European leaders such as Janos Kadar of Hungary and Erich Honecker of East Germany implored Gorbachev’s government for help in preserving their regimes to little avail. Soviet policy in Eastern Europe stagnated as Gorbachev refrained from coercing Eastern European leaders to introduce reform measures. In addition, he declined to advocate on behalf of reformist challengers to the current regimes in these countries.²⁰ In short, Gorbachev believed that Eastern European governments could reform themselves without external assistance or pressure. He proved unwilling to risk Soviet *perestroika* efforts at the expense of imposing outside assistance on these governments which could, in turn, jeopardize Soviet stability.

¹⁶ Levesque, Jacques. “Soviet Approaches to Eastern Europe at the Beginning of 1989.” *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001): 49–72, 49.

¹⁷ Zubok, Vladislav. “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War.” *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001): 5–23, 5-6.

¹⁸ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 7.

¹⁹ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 8.

²⁰ Levesque, “Soviet Approaches to Eastern Europe at the Beginning of 1989,” 49.

In all realms, the Soviet Union continued to loosen its grip on the countries within the Soviet bloc. In an effort to improve Soviet domestic economic conditions, Moscow grew more selective in its economic subsidization of Warsaw Pact allies. Because of the Politburo's domestic emphasis, Moscow also demonstrated an unwillingness to involve itself in the domestic political and security affairs of its satellites. Withholding economic aid and oil export subsidies, Moscow put the Warsaw Pact governments increasingly under strain from internal, nascent opposition forces.²¹ Further undermining Soviet influence in the “Near Abroad” in July 1987, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze adopted a new doctrine for the Warsaw Pact, including reductions in the size and scope of Soviet military presence. Rather than reaffirming a military commitment to the Warsaw Pact, the doctrine fueled instability across the region in the face of a strong NATO alliance.²² Gorbachev’s actions during 1988 served as the crucial turning point for ending the Cold War by allowing Eastern Europe to slip from the Soviet grip.

In his interactions with the West that year, Gorbachev finally concluded several arms reduction and control agreements with President Ronald Reagan culminating with a momentous US presidential visit to Moscow. In October 1988, he met with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, articulating the full range of Soviet reforms including an emphasis on enhanced civil freedoms, closer relations with Europe, nuclear arms reductions, and restrictions on Soviet use of force.²³ In November, as acknowledgement of an inability to save the foundering Soviet economy, Gorbachev secured approval from the Politburo for a unilateral withdrawal of Soviet forces across Central Europe as a cost-saving effort.²⁴

In fact, by the end of the year, these dynamic course corrections in Soviet policies forced the Politburo to begin discussing strategies for dealing with the deteriorating political and economic situations in Eastern and Central Europe. To that end, the Institute of Economics of World Socialist System led by Oleg Bogmolov recommended discounting any hint of force as a means of stabilizing the deteriorating situation across

²¹ Levesque, “Soviet Approaches to Eastern Europe at the Beginning of 1989,” 49-50.

²² Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 8.

²³ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 9.

²⁴ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 9.

the Warsaw Pact due to the expected backlash this would have closer to home.²⁵ In his speech at the United Nations on 7 December 1988, Gorbachev reaffirmed Soviet commitment to “freedom of choice” for these countries and announced substantial armed force withdrawals from the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary by the end of 1991.²⁶ By early 1989, Gorbachev openly transmitted Soviet intentions to avoid underwriting Warsaw Pact governments who could not secure their own domestic popular support.²⁷ This period of Soviet history is significant for its discontinuity with past Soviet and future Russian events. Moscow essentially surrendered Eastern Europe and the provinces of the Soviet empire in an unsuccessful attempt to save itself from impending and uncontrollable demise. Tsars and Soviet leaders during the Soviet era and Russian leaders since have sought to gain, maintain, or tighten the grip over these border areas.

Communism Falls in Eastern Europe Triggering Dissolution of U.S.S.R.

The Cold War did not end with a treaty or a ceasefire as had other major wars. Instead, beginning in the spring of 1989, Eastern European governments were overwhelmed by popular opposition, untethering the countries from the Soviet orbit for good as the Soviet Union itself teetered on the brink of dissolution. Starting in February 1989, the Soviet Politburo began to lose control of the situation on their periphery based on the unintended consequences from Moscow’s relaxation of control and tacit approval for internal reforms. The Iron Curtain was steadily drawn back from February 1989, culminating with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November.

In Poland, the government reopened negotiations with the banned *Solidarity* group on February 6 culminating in “Round Table Talks” which provided for Poland’s first free elections. In elections on 4 June 1989, *Solidarity* won the 65 percent of the Polish Parliament’s (*Sejm*) seats, effectively overthrowing the Communist Party. In September, the first new, non-communist government in Eastern Europe formed as

²⁵ “Memorandum to Alexander Yakovlev from the Bogomolov Commission (Marina Sylvanskaya), February 1989.” CWIHP Bulletin, Issue 12/13, 61.

²⁶ Gorbachev, Mikhail. “Gorbachev’s Speech to the U.N. December 7, 1988”, Excerpts of Address by Mikhail Gorbachev, 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session, December 7, 1988; accessed 7 March 2015 at http://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm

²⁷ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 20.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a dissident in his own right and a former Lech Walesa acolyte, became the new prime minister.²⁸

As in Poland, opposition groups consolidated around an Opposition Roundtable dissent group, eventually forcing the resignation of Janos Kadar by 1988. In March 1989, his replacement as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Hungary, Miklos Nemeth, informed Gorbachev that he intended to remove restrictions on cross-border personnel movement through Hungary to the west for German Democratic Republic and Hungarian citizens; he also intended to cease border monitoring.²⁹ Rather than inviting a harsh Soviet response, Hungary also secured a large financial loan package from the Federal Republic of Germany (i.e. West Germany) in exchange for such provisions. Shevardnadze signaled tacit Soviet approval by emphasizing the entire affair concerned only Hungary, the GDR and the FRG.³⁰ On the pretense that barbed wire barrier was “obsolete and hence a health hazard,” Nemeth ordered Hungarian security personnel to completely dismantle it. On October 23, 1989, the opposition successfully negotiated a new constitution, paving the way for democratic elections that included reformers.³¹

Even as events unfolded in Poland and Hungary, student protestors on a hunger strike in opposition to potential Abkhazian secession from Georgia assembled in front of the Government House in Tbilisi, Georgia. Initially peaceful, the protest turned into a large anti-government demonstration. The on-scene Soviet military commander opted to block escape routes, ordering Soviet Red Army troops to end the demonstration using toxic gas and entrenching hardware, killing at least 19.³² While Gorbachev criticized both the Red Army and the Georgian Communist leadership, the use of force and his inability to control such events signaled steady devolution of state control to potential opposition groups.

Events in East Germany served as the most stunning example of the fall of the Iron Curtain. A world away, Gorbachev was visiting China for the first time in April

²⁸ Curry, Jane L. “Poland, the Politics of ‘God’s Playground’,” 309.

²⁹ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 12.

³⁰ Zubok, “New Evidence on the End of the Cold War,” 12.

³¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Milestones 1989–1992, Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, 1989,” (31 October 2013), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/fall-of-communism>

³² “The Tbilisi Massacre, April 1989: Documents” in Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001): 31-49.

1989 just as Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping began to deal with his own internal dissent large student protests in Tiananmen Square. On June 3-4, 1989, the Chinese military response resulted in a likely death toll exceeding those of all revolutionary uprisings in Europe combined.³³ East Germany's hardline communist leader Erich Honecker and his secret police chief, Erich Mielke, extolled the virtues of the Chinese crackdown, despite a rising torrent of departing East German refugees taking advantage of Hungary's open border with the West. Unable to control the refugee flow through force, Honecker ordered the use of refugee trains to facilitate their movement.

On a visit to Berlin in early October 1989 for official commemorations of the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, Gorbachev was received by crowds "shouting, 'Gorby, help us!...stay here!'" as he stood next to Honecker on the reviewing platform.³⁴ During the visit, Gorbachev called his closest personal advisor, Anatoly Chernyaev, several times and indicated he would not publicly support Honecker but only the Republic [GDR] and the Revolution.³⁵ Just after Gorbachev's return to Moscow, large-scale protests resumed in East Germany. On 18 October, Honecker was forced to resign, replaced by Egon Krenz. Assuring Gorbachev that the GDR would not use violence to end the continuing protests or prevent refugees from fleeing to the West, Krenz travelled to Moscow for emergency consultations with Gorbachev. Rather than providing advice or promising Soviet assistance to Krenz, Gorbachev tacitly approved his plan to further loosen travel restrictions from the GDR.³⁶ Back in the GDR on 9 November, Krenz ordered a functionary to brief relaxations of these restrictions at a press briefing. But, based on miscommunication, the functionary instead briefed the stunned press corps that GDR citizens could travel freely through any border crossings, including Berlin itself. This unintentional press gaffe touched off the end of the Cold War in Europe. As the world watched, Germans from both sides of the Berlin Wall began dismantling it with hand tools.³⁷

³³ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 243.

³⁴ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 245.

³⁵ Chernyaev, Anatoly in "Document No. 5 Excerpt From the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev, 5 October 1989" Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001): 17.

³⁶ Zubok, Vladislav. "New Evidence on the End of the Cold War." *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001): 5–23, 13.

³⁷ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 246.

As the Bogomolov Commission's February 1989 report suggested, the rest of Eastern European Communist governments were also at risk. Shortly after the Berlin Wall fell, Bulgaria's ruler Todor Zhivkov, in power since 1954, stepped down while announcing intentions to work with the opposition. On 17 November in Czechoslovakia, protests broke out in Prague resulting eventually in the Communist Party's demise. By the end of 1989, a new Czech coalition government was in place led by Alexander Dubcek as leader of the national assembly and Vaclav Havel as the new president. In Romania, dictator Nicolai Ceausescu opted to use Tiananmen-style violence against protestors in Timisoara on 17 December, resulting in the deaths of at least 97 protestors. After failing to calm a mass rally in Bucharest several days later, Ceausescu was jeered and fled the city by helicopter. After apprehension, he and his wife were tried and summarily placed in front of a firing squad on Christmas Day.³⁸

Soviet non-intervention in Eastern Europe in 1989 effectively ended the Cold War. Internationally, the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of communism and served as a positive sign of warming relations between the West and the Soviet Union. Domestically, the fall of communism in Eastern Europe signaled the beginning of the end for Gorbachev's premiership and the Soviet Union as a monolithic threat.

During the Malta Summit in December 1989, hastened by the rapid events throughout the year, Gorbachev hosted President George H.W. Bush aboard the Soviet cruise ship *Maxim Gorky*. During two days of meetings, Gorbachev articulated the Soviet Union's new path to President Bush. Reiterating his belief that "reliance on force, on military superiority, and the associated arms race have not been justified," Gorbachev continued: "And confrontation arising from ideological convictions has not justified itself either; as a result of this we ended up swearing at one another. We reached a dangerous brink and it is good that we managed to stop. It is good that now mutual trust between our countries has emerged."³⁹ In response, President Bush redoubled support for Gorbachev's reform efforts centered on *perestroika*. The two leaders agreed to continue

³⁸ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 247.

³⁹ Gorbachev, Mikhail in "At Historic Crossroads: Documents on the December 1989 Malta Summit," *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Cold War International History Project, no. 12/13 (Fall-Winter 2001): 229-241, 232.

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty talks as well as finalizing the limitations on troop numbers contained in the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

The Soviet Union continued fracturing through 1990 as Gorbachev encouraged multi-party elections and Germany officially re-united into one nation under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's banner. Additionally, Soviet troops were withdrawn from the GDR. In the Baltic States and the Caucasus, large non-Russian polities intensified their clamoring for independence from the Union. Lithuania was the first to declare independence in March 1990. In January 1991, the Soviet troops attempting to maintain order in Vilnius fired on and killed 15 unarmed protestors near the city's television tower. This strengthened Lithuanian resolve against Soviet occupation. Latvia and Estonia declared their independence shortly thereafter. In June 1991, Boris Yeltsin was elected president of the largest of the Soviet Union's 15 republics: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. He was now ideally placed to achieve his vision of the Russian Federation's future through dis-establishment of the Communist Party, wholesale dismemberment of the USSR, and creation of a new, market-oriented state.⁴⁰ After a hardline communist coup aimed at deposing Gorbachev failed in August 1991, Yeltsin stood on a tank next to Russia's parliament in Moscow, decrying both the Communist Party coup orchestrators and the broken Soviet system. From then on, Yeltsin undermined any tenuous attempts by Gorbachev to maintain the Soviet Union in its existing configuration.

Russia's Decade of Crisis – 1991 - 2000

After disbanding Gorbachev's legislative creation, the Congress of People's Deputies, Yeltsin moved to create the new Commonwealth of Independent States in tandem with Ukraine and Belarus in December 1991. Despite the antagonistic relationship these two leaders maintained during dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin completed what Gorbachev had "unintentionally begun – the final destruction of an empire, a superpower, and a one-party state."⁴¹ Though completely marginalized during the Nineteenth Party Conference in the summer of 1988, his political rebound started

⁴⁰ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 254.

⁴¹ Shevtsova, Lilia. *Russia Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*. (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2007), 2.

with his 1989 victory in the Gorbachev-initiated legislative elections.⁴² By successfully crafting a position for himself as the primary opposition candidate while Gorbachev's domestic appeal waned, Yeltsin presided over the final break-up of the Soviet Union while creating a powerful political base heretofore nonexistent in the USSR.⁴³

Elected President of the Russian Federation in June 1991, Yeltsin led the country until 1999, when Vladimir Putin replaced him. This transitional decade served as a crisis period for the Russian Federation as the superpower receded and Yeltsin's government struggled to restore regional and global power status. During Yeltsin's tenure, the government attempted and often failed to adjust to its new political, economic and geopolitical challenges. Yeltsin's eight-year presidency left a legacy defined by three significant events, helping to shape Vladimir Putin's later actions following his ascendency to the presidency in 2000. During this decade, the Russian government struggled with the fundamental tension between escaping from its Soviet past and building a revitalized, influential Russian state. At the center of this tension, Yeltsin represented a continuation of Soviet-era power politics centered on a highly personalized leadership style as he increasingly surrounded himself with loyalists at the expense of broader democratic reforms.

The first event was the failed legislative putsch against Yeltsin and his policies in 1993, resulting in a military assault on the Russian parliament and accentuation of Russian internal upheaval. Yeltsin initiated a two-year war to stamp out a secessionist uprising in Chechnya. This served as the second significant event of the decade. This was the first post-Soviet use of massive military force presaging Russia's intent to use force to preserve its national security interests, even in the face of international condemnation. Finally, the global financial crisis of 1998 precipitated Yeltsin's implementation of emergency measures including devaluation of the Russian ruble. In response, the State Duma demanded Yeltsin's resignation, touching off nearly one year of tit-for-tat exchanges between the executive and legislative branches. Unlike the first two turning points, the 1998 financial crisis did not markedly influence Yeltsin's foreign policy in the near abroad. Instead, it paved the way for his successor's inheritance of a

⁴² Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 13.

⁴³ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 4.

resurgent Russian economy founded on energy and natural resources as instruments of foreign policy in the Near Abroad and Europe.

These exchanges culminated with Yeltsin's decision to step down as Russian President, allowing Vladimir Putin to rise as Prime Minister in August 1999 then as temporary President in December 1999. In late 1999, a series of terrorist attacks in Moscow and southern Russia attributed to Chechen separatists resulted in the renewal of Russian military action in Chechnya. That year closed with Yeltsin's unexpected resignation as President, his succession by Putin, temporarily at first and then legally, through popular elections in March 2000.

The First Crisis – Early Government Turmoil

After the Soviet Union's dissolution, the Russian political elite consisted of two groups: reformers desiring adoption of pro-Western market and economic practices and the elite *nomenklatura* seeking the wealth and power afforded through capitalist reforms.⁴⁴ Pro-Western reformers sought energetic and rapid economic change, inclusion in the Western institutional system, and retreat from the Near Abroad. The conservative *nomenklatura* acknowledged the need for cooperation with the West and rebuilding of the economy, but were increasingly defined by their fixation on reestablishment of Russia's great power status within Europe and the international system.⁴⁵ This discussion adopts Tsygankov's description of these two groups as "Westernizers" and "Statists."

Yeltsin – Early Promise – 1991-1993

As Russia removed military forces from the Near Abroad by 1992, many Russians feared NATO expansion and destabilization caused by simmering conflicts on Russia's periphery.⁴⁶ As a result, Yeltsin's western-leaning foreign policy disposition was jeopardized by a general feeling of insecurity within the government regarding its foreign policy and the domestic Russian polity regarding its weakened internal situation. As Yeltsin's efforts lost their attractive luster, the Western approach receded as an attractive Russian option for resuscitating the nation's political and economic vitality. The absence of a reform strategy combining economic liberalization with reformation of

⁴⁴ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 58.

⁴⁵ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 61.

⁴⁶ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 63

a tenuous institutional culture resulted in increasing conflict between Yeltsin's administration and the old *apparatchiki* dominated by the Statists.⁴⁷

In most democracies, foreign policy and domestic considerations often result in tension between the executive and legislative branches. In Russia's fledgling democracy by the end of 1992, animosity between these two branches gradually escalated as Yeltsin's leadership style became unreliable and unpredictable. His sudden political reactions belied the absence of a structured policy framework for strengthening Russia's government and economy contributing to factionalization of the legislature.⁴⁸

Accentuating growing public dissatisfaction with Yeltsin and his policies, nearly 300 public protests occurred in Moscow during the first five months of 1992 as communist extremists and nationalist fringe elements found a voice and receptive audiences.⁴⁹ Yeltsin's key economic advisor, Yegor Gaidar, continued to promote a "shock therapy" prescription of price liberalization and privatization precipitating widespread price increases within Russia. This contributed to a deterioration in public and governmental support for continued democratic reforms within the legislature. By the spring of 1992, adherents to the primary democratic party in the legislature, DemRossiya, dropped from 205 to 73 members.⁵⁰

As the rift between the executive and legislative branches deepened, the "Westernist course" inertia within Yeltsin's government stalled by the end of 1992.⁵¹ Faced with external challenges and growing domestic discontent, Yeltsin used his tight circle of advisors in an attempt to create free market economics, democratize the political regime, divest imperial holdings, and resume a strong regional and global geopolitical role.⁵² Instead of instilling confidence in the Russian polity, Yeltsin and Kozyrev inflamed civic resentment against the West, resulting in a nationalistic resurgence as the economy nosedived and the legislature rebelled.⁵³ On 21 September 1993, Yeltsin unilaterally disbanded the legislature and called for new elections in December. His

⁴⁷ Shevtsova, Lilia. *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*. Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 36

⁴⁸ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*, 36-37.

⁴⁹ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*, 47.

⁵⁰ Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*, 51.

⁵¹ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 66.

⁵² Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition*, 9.

⁵³ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 74.

actions unleashed a maelstrom of opposition and served as an early turning point for an immature Russian democracy.

In response, the Statist speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, and Yeltsin's Vice President, Aleksandr Rutskoi, barricaded themselves in the Russian legislative building known as the White House. After cutting off vital electricity and water supplies to the building, Yeltsin ordered his Defense Minister, Pavel Grachev, to implement a state of emergency across the city and plan for retaliation against the isolated errant lawmakers.⁵⁴ Grachev's formula for ending the parliamentary insurrection and the violence city-wide was to use military force. After shelling of the Russian White House (Parliament building) on 4 October caused severe fire damage, Khasbulatov Rutskoi surrendered, ending the siege. In December, the vast majority of voting Russians (58 percent) approved a new Russian Constitution and, for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, awarded the largest share of votes to nationalist and communist parties.

Perceived Western Shunning of Russia after Cold War

Russia's attempts to continue reconciliation with Europe and the United States vis-à-vis NATO or the OSCE were hindered by the political complexities within the Russian government and severe domestic economic hardship. Yeltsin and Kozyrev's foreign policy in the Near Abroad appeared bereft of any purpose or vision for relations with its neighbors just as NATO and the European Union attempted to fill the security void on Russia's European periphery. The "structural uncertainty" defining the international relations landscape caused differing Russian and Western interpretations of legal state interaction as well as "the role and shape of major international institutions."⁵⁵ NATO's decision to expand into former Warsaw Pact states plus the deterioration of the situation in the splintered former Yugoslavia compounded domestic calls for a muscular Russian re-appraisal of its security situation. Kozyrev's continued pro-Western policy stance in the face of such Western expansion coupled with potential NATO action in the

⁵⁴ Balmforth, Tom; Kates, Glenn; Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty; "Twenty Years After: Key Players In Russia's October 1993 Crisis," 3 Oct 2013; <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-players-1993-crisis/25125000.html>

⁵⁵ Thorun, Christian. *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West*. (Hounds mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 143.

Balkans strengthened potential opposition. These policies invited the unrestrained criticism of extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky along with more moderate Statists such as Yevgeni Primakov, the director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service.

Yeltsin's Transition – Domestic Politics & Damaged Russian Honor

During the pivotal years of 1993 and 1994, Yeltsin was forced to alter many early Russian Federation policies. Indicative of potential future geopolitical ruptures between Russia and its European neighbors, Yeltsin and Kozyrev increasingly made negotiation and cooperation with NATO anathema to their policies. In an attempt to appease growing hardline Statist opposition, Yeltsin rejected an invitation to join NATO's Partnership for Peace, a program designed to generate military-to-military cooperation between the alliance and states of the former Soviet bloc.⁵⁶ Statists solidified a potential Eurasian alternative to Kozyrev's Atlanticist admiration, encouraging Russian-led CIS engagement across Asia and the Middle East. Increasingly portraying Kozyrev's policies as evidence of ceding Russia's great power status to Western subjugation, a "swelling tide of chauvinism and nationalism" rose within the legislature and the polity. As this tide rose, the Yeltsin camp's optimism that it could rejoin the ranks of the great powers as a normal (non-communist, democratized) country faded.⁵⁷ In order to assuage continued criticism, Kozyrev's policies gradually shifted to acknowledge Statist calls by adopting a "more stridently imperialist posture" than the Yeltsin camp expressed before the White House shelling.⁵⁸

In an attempt to re-assert Russian authority in the former USSR, Kozyrev adopted language shifting Russian pro-Western foreign policy to one primarily focused on the Near Abroad and domestic issues. The foreign minister increasingly emphasized the "Kozyrev Doctrine" as articulated in the 1992 Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept. Two key tenets of this doctrine aimed at preventing newly independent Central European states from isolating Russia as a new European buffer while simultaneously preventing NATO/European Union efforts to expunge Moscow's influence.⁵⁹ Instead, the doctrine contributed to an alienation of these newly independent regions toward

⁵⁶ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 75.

⁵⁷ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 34.

⁵⁸ Bugajski, Janusz. *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism*. (Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 8.

⁵⁹ Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, 136.

Moscow. Russia's military doctrine approved by Yeltsin in November 1993, bolstered this assertion of a Russian right to act within the former Soviet sphere vis-à-vis newly established mobile forces. Together, these two doctrines unified "the leaders of all major Russian parties" in opposition to NATO's plan to expand.

Yet, despite these policy shifts, nationalist and communist factions railed against Yeltsin's attempts to proceed on a Westernizing course. Using economic dissatisfaction and poor living conditions as evidence, these groups steadily denounced liberal reforms to gain voter support and inspire civic dissatisfaction.⁶⁰ Both factions increased in popularity, garnering favorable popular election results in 1993 and 1995 elections.⁶¹ Even as Yeltsin's domestic policies were largely failing, Statist rhetoric increased regarding "persistent Russian claims" that the "former Soviet republics were not considered fully sovereign entities" but rather part of Russia's "outer border."⁶² The deteriorating situation in the Balkans, and NATO airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs in 1994 led to increased scrutiny of Yeltsin and Kozyrev's westernizing approach.

The Second Crisis - The First Chechen War – 1994-1996

Proclamations regarding the importance of the Near Abroad reinforced the Russian political and military elite's primary concern with securitization of its borders and retention of influence in the countries of the FSU. Even with dissolution of the FSU into a weaker conglomeration of states in a regional security complex, the new Russian Federation "never abandoned its great power aspirations in these lands."⁶³ Yet the first military crisis for the new Russian Federation eventually resulted in the use of force within its own borders in Chechnya.

Just as the Soviet Union was in its final death throes in late 1991, the Chechen population elected Dzokhar Dudayev, a former Soviet general, as president. After the Chechens promptly declared independence, Yeltsin dispatched 2,500 troops to the autonomous republic's border but retracted them after they were blocked from entry by a mass of demonstrators. For the next three years, Russia allowed Chechnya to exist as a

⁶⁰ Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, 9.

⁶¹ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 172.

⁶² Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, 11.

⁶³ Rumer, Eugene B., and Richard D. Sokolsky. "U.S.-Russian Relations: Toward a New Strategic Framework." *Strategic Forum, Institutes for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University* 192 (May 2002): 1–7, 2.

de facto independent country within Russia.⁶⁴ The decision to dispatch 40,000 Russian ground troops to Chechnya in December 1994 marked the most definitive example of the turn away from western-leaning reform policies towards the “geopolitical Realism” defining the rest of Yeltsin’s government.⁶⁵ From 1994 until Yeltsin ceded the Presidency to Vladimir Putin in December 1999, Russia’s geographical proximity and historical experiences in its Eurasian sphere of influence helped define its actions.

Originally declaring its independence in 1991 under the leadership of Dzhokar Dudayev, Chechnya had been continually in a state of turmoil following his dissolution of Parliament in September 1993. After seizing power from the communist leadership in September 1991, Dudayev was elected President of the “Chechen Republic” in October 1991.⁶⁶ From 1991 to Dudayev’s dissolution of Chechnya’s parliament in September 1993, Yeltsin’s policies in the Near Abroad remained muted until the threat of secession and potential instability forced him to divert attention away from previously higher priorities, including the domestic economy and relations with the West.⁶⁷ By late 1993, Dudayev and his vassals initiated small-scale guerrilla-style war against Russian military forces attempting to stave off the increasing unrest in the province. Yeltsin’s domestic popularity plumbed new depths with a popular approval rating less than 10 percent. Russia’s domestic Gross National Product shrank 15 per cent in 1994 from the previous year. With presidential elections scheduled for 1996, Yeltsin’s advisers unwisely counselled military intervention as a means to divert attention away from the precipitous decline of Russian living standards which were helping bolster nationalist and communist opponents. Despite Russian military opposition to such an intervention, Yeltsin authorized a Chechen invasion through two secret directives in November and December 1994. Expecting rapid success in Chechnya as a means of arresting his flagging popularity, Yeltsin found that the war intensified into a long and costly Russian endeavor.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 161.

⁶⁵ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 28.

⁶⁶ Cornell, Svante E. “The War Against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction.” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 167–184, 169.

⁶⁷ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. (Lanham, Maryland: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 91; Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 161.

⁶⁸ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 163; Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 91.

Still reeling from defeat in Afghanistan and the loss of prestige associated with the Soviet Union’s demise, the Russian military used brute force instead of precision to prosecute the war. During the two-year war, hundreds of thousands were internally and externally displaced, and the Russian army suffered “roughly 50,000 deaths...much more than the Soviet Union’s war in Afghanistan.”⁶⁹ Most dramatically, the Russian Air Force’s imprecise aerial bombardment of Grozny during the first months of 1995 resulted in as many as twenty-nine thousand casualties, many of who were “older and disabled people and children...unable to flee the city.” In his historical account of this war, Marcel H. van Herpen points out that this was likely the most severe attack on an “open city in Europe since” the Allied bombardment of Dresden in February 1945.

As the rising Russian military death toll and international condemnation intensified through 1995, the Chechens continued to resist despite heavy casualties and the occupation of Grozny and many other population centers.⁷⁰ During 1995, Yeltsin’s health deteriorated markedly as he began to consolidate power within a tightening circle of his closest associates including members of his family.⁷¹ At the end of 1995, Yeltsin replaced the “westernizing” Foreign Minister Kozyrev with the “Statist” Primakov. As one of his first acts, Primakov proclaimed the Near Abroad his top foreign policy priority.⁷² As the Chechen war became more costly in Russian lives and money, the war grew domestically unpopular for Yeltsin as the 1996 elections loomed.

In an effort to end the war and retain any hope for re-election, Yeltsin publicly announced a peace plan including a ceasefire and the attendant departure of some Russian troops from the province. Despite indicating Russian intentions to mediate directly with Dudayev, he was killed in a Russian missile attack in April 1996.⁷³ During this first military intervention under Yeltsin, the Russian military was essentially demoralized and defeated, eventually withdrawing after suffering heavy losses in October 1996. Despite an outward proclamation of success, Yeltsin’s war in Chechnya was a dismal political and military humiliation for the Kremlin. Yeltsin’s envoy, General

⁶⁹ Cornell, Svante E. “The War Against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction.” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 167–84, 170.

⁷⁰ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 164.

⁷¹ Shevtsova, *Russia Lost in Transition*, 19.

⁷² Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 65.

⁷³ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 164; Heaney, Dominic, ed. *The Territories of the Russian Federation*. 14th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 22

Aleksandr Lebed, formalized the Khasavyurt Peace Accords in May 1997 with Dudayev's replacement, Aslan Maskhadov, "a former Soviet commander and a well-known moderate," as Chechnya gained tacit approval for de facto independence.⁷⁴ While the peace accords ended direct military intervention in Chechnya, they only temporarily marginalized the radical, extremist elements in the province for the next two years. Putin later used the context of combating terrorism for a second war there after his ascendancy to the Russian presidency.

The Third Crisis – The Russian Financial Meltdown of 1998 & Yeltsin's Legacy

During two rounds of presidential elections, Yeltsin survived reelection in the summer of 1996 with a slim majority margin of 53.8 per cent of the votes.⁷⁵ Bolstered by an influential mass media, Yeltsin overcame the Chechen disaster as he demonized his opponents as zealots desirous of the "communist past."⁷⁶ Leveraging support from the emergent oligarchy, wealthy from the largesse created by mass post-Soviet privatization across the commodity, media and financial sectors, Yeltsin's inner circle supported democracy less and their joint power more. By 1998, official GDP figures for the country indicated a 40 percent decrease from 1991 levels while prices and inflation continued to rise. Hyperinflation wracked the Russian economy by the time Russia's August 1998 financial crisis started.⁷⁷

The Southeast Asian financial crisis of 1997 created disastrous ripple effects for Russia based on the country's commodity-dependent export economy. By mid-August 1998, the Russian government could no longer "redeem the country's bonds and pay back its lenders" as the price of petroleum, "Russia's most important export product," plummeted from 26 United States dollars (USDs) to 15 USDs a barrel.⁷⁸ Banks closed and industrial output plunged nearly five percent from 1997 as the Russian stock market all but collapsed as a global market.⁷⁹ From January to March 1998, the Russian

⁷⁴ Cornell, Svante E. "The War Against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 167–184, 171.

⁷⁵ Heaney, Dominic, ed. *The Territories of the Russian Federation*. 14th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 22.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin*, 29.

⁷⁷ Goldman, Marshall I. *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008), 74.

⁷⁸ Goldman, *Petrostate*, 77.

⁷⁹ Goldman, *Petrostate*, 76.

treasury lost an estimated 1.5 billion USD, contravening data from both the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development indicating positive growth for 1998. As the economy plummeted, Yeltsin suddenly dismissed his closest political advisors including Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais and Interior Minister Anatoly. The rise in public ire coupled with the dissatisfaction of the oligarchs triggered a series of tumultuous shakeups in Yeltsin's government in an attempt to deflect attention from direct personal responsibility. Appointing Sergei Kiriyenko as Premier in March 1998, this was followed by his rapid dismissal, a failed attempt to re-appoint Chernomyrdin in August and the eventual State Duma confirmation of Yevgeni Primakov in September 1998.⁸⁰ As Foreign Minister, Primakov insisted that the country's international marginalization and domestic turmoil would be short-lived, even as the government effectively ceased to exist from March-April 1998 and again from August-September 1998.⁸¹

The rise of the oligarchs Yeltsin facilitated through the privatization shock therapy of the early 1990s now maintained a powerful and influential role in the "superpresidential system" present by 1998. With broad influence across Russia's economic, political, and foreign policy domains, the wealthy business elite effectively created an untenable situation for the Russian State as they pursued personal enrichment and power at Russian society's expense.⁸²

From a foreign policy perspective, Russia's 1998 economic collapse and the government turmoil that followed stalled efforts towards further agreements with NATO and the United States. Primakov's successful May 1997 negotiation of the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between Russia and NATO" signaled a shift from resistance to NATO expansion to tacit acknowledgement of the organization's role in European security.⁸³ This agreement created the Permanent Joint Council as a decision-making body which afforded new collaborative opportunities for Russia with NATO. Even as NATO extended membership invitations to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in July 1997, Primakov continued to tack a course of

⁸⁰ Heaney, *The Territories of the Russian Federation*, 22

⁸¹ Medvedev, Roy. *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 322.

⁸² Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, 16-17.

⁸³ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 173-174.

“pragmatic cooperation” with the West. In the Balkans, Russia worked within the structure of the 1994 Contact Group (with the United States, France, Britain and Germany) in an attempt to manage the deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo diplomatically.

As internal political and economic instability continued throughout 1998, however, foreign policy concerns assumed a lower priority than resuscitating the Russian economy. That changed again in March 1999 as NATO commenced airstrikes in Yugoslavia in an attempt to stop Serbian military actions against Kosovar Albanians in Kosovo. Primakov, en-route to International Monetary Fund negotiations in Washington, directed his VIP aircraft to turn around in-flight. Promptly retracting participation in the Founding Agreement, he withdrew Russian representatives from Brussels and ejected NATO’s representatives from Russia.⁸⁴ Despite Primakov’s dual-tracked ambition of attempting to balance against US-European interests while fomenting integration with and control of the European Near Abroad, Russia remained materially unable to assert its foreign policy aspirations in light of its precipitous economic deterioration.⁸⁵

In May 1999, fearing any further deterioration of Western-Russian relations, Yeltsin used his superpresidential powers again, dismissing Primakov as Premier along with his government and installing Sergei Stepashin. Even though Primakov garnered a 70 percent public approval rating, the constitutional powers imbued in the presidency allowed Yeltsin to oust his government and the popularly elected and supported parliament.⁸⁶ But the constitution also stipulated that Yeltsin would be forced to leave the Kremlin at the end of his second term with culmination of the spring 2000 presidential elections. Primakov, in league with the popular Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov, was a likely strong candidate for the presidency. His public promises to pursue legal action against any oligarchs who illegally subverted government regulations to build their own wealth also indirectly threatened Yeltsin.⁸⁷ As he, his family, and other Kremlin officials drew scrutiny from Swiss and US banking officials for suspected banking improprieties, Yeltsin’s panic-stricken inner circle commenced the search for a

⁸⁴ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 173-174.

⁸⁵ Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 96.

⁸⁶ Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia*, 347.

⁸⁷ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 173.

successor. Stepashin, never truly accepted as a strong or enduring replacement by Yeltsin, was dismissed after only three months. In his place, he installed the “reserved and uncharismatic apparatchik Vladimir Putin,” until that time serving as the head of the FSB.⁸⁸



⁸⁸ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 174.

Chapter 5

President Vladimir Putin – Strength in Crisis

Russia is about to leave behind the period of economic and political transition [the 1990s]. Notwithstanding all the problems and slip-ups, we have entered the main track of humanity.

– President Vladimir V. Putin, “*Russia At the Turn of the Millennium*”

Vladimir Putin assumed the premiership in August 1999 two days after armed militants from Chechnya invaded Dagestan, seizing control of two villages. Almost immediately, Yeltsin directed military forces to put down the uprising, precipitating a new wave of violence in the Caucasus. In September, a series of terrorist attacks attributed to Chechen separatists followed in Moscow and other southern Russian cities, triggering Russian air strikes in Chechnya itself. The beginning of the Second Chechen War was prosecuted using even more force against the separatists and the Chechen population than the first. Following Yeltsin’s unexpected abdication of the Presidency in December 1999, Putin assumed the position in accordance with both the 1993 constitution and Yeltsin’s plan. Almost immediately, Putin afforded prosecution immunity to Yeltsin and his family as the financial malfeasance allegations lingered. With the transition in the Kremlin, the second Chechen conflict became Putin’s War.

On the economic front, the Russian economy started to regain momentum as world oil prices rebounded. After 1998, Russian GDP steadily increased until the next major financial crisis in 2008-2009. Additionally, Russia encouraged foreign capital investment in an effort to rebuild its financial reserves. For Putin, this economic revival boosted his popularity immensely as GDP increased for average Russians. The added income and popular support allowed him to replenish state coffers with an emphasis on the “central state’s apparatus of coercion and control.”¹ The wealthy and politically influential oligarchs who had acquired so much power during Yeltsin’s decade were transformed from “multimillionaires into multibillionaires” due to the oil boom.² Based

¹ Gustaffson, Thane. *Wheel of Fortune: The Battle for Oil and Power in Russia*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 187.

² Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 187.

mostly on his strong military response to the second Chechen situation and the improving economy, Putin was elected President in his own right in March 2000.

Institutionally, Putin and his inner circle intensified efforts to rebuild Russia's great power status by energizing regional institutions or creating new ones. Focusing on four zones of influence in the former Soviet sphere of influence, Putin focused on the Near Abroad as a means to counter NATO encroachment. During the Yeltsin decade, the government attempted to reestablish its power through profession of liberalism followed by geopolitical realism as westernizers lost influence and the statist gained prominence in the Kremlin. Once the economy began its sharp rebound in 1998-1999, this foreign policy position gradually shifted to an emphasis on geo-economic issues as Putin's government focused on rebuilding the shattered economy while continuing enhancements to the state security apparatus. Following his re-election in 2004, Putin and his Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov adopted three themes in their writings and public announcements: the unpredictability of the international environment in the post-Soviet era; the presence of "Cold War stereotypes in the West" used to label Russian intentions; and Western and US imposition of law and cultural norms on others.³

In a series of policy concepts and speeches from 2000 onward, Putin consistently emphasized a revisionist view of Russian power founded on reestablishing its preeminent position in the "post-Soviet space" as a "top priority."⁴ In 2000, Putin released his essay "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium." This scene-setter for Putin's future policies highlighted Russia's reliance on its most powerful economic assets. From a national economic perspective, he touted energy and metal resources as the country's most promising assets for improving GDP, industrial output, and export outflows.⁵ Careful not to condemn Yeltsin's oft-erratic policy decisions with regard to the economy, Putin blamed the "awkward, deformed structure" of market reforms and privatization on inexperience due to the "utterly different principles" of Soviet economics.⁶ To fix the "political, social and economic cataclysms" and "radical reforms" of the 1990s, Putin

³ Thorun, Christian. *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West*. (Hounds-mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 31.

⁴ Monaghan, Andrew. "The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity." *Chatham House* 2013, no. 03 (April 2013): 1–8, 3.

⁵ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," 222.

⁶ Putin, "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," 223.

outlined three themes which continue to illuminate foreign policy today: “The Russian Idea”; “The Strong State”; and an “Efficient Economy.” As the nucleus of the Russian idea, Putin emphasized the requirement to regain its rightful position as a “great world power” (*derzhavnost*) while rebuilding the instruments of a “strong state power” (*gosudarsvennichestvo*) as a “source and guarantor of order.”⁷ The first quality pointed to the Russian desire to restore its Soviet position in the regional and the global context. Putin’s description of the second quality implied re-establishment of stronger central government authority through security and regulatory functions based on society’s concern with the “apparent weakening of state authority.”⁸ The initiation of the second Chechen War in 1999 and the wave of domestic terrorist attacks which ensued from 2002 to 2004 provided the necessary justification for Putin to progressively enhance state control mechanisms at the expense of public freedoms including access to independent media forums.

This chapter will highlight three key periods during Putin’s presidency until President Dmitri Medvedev’s election in 2008. First, the events leading to the two-phase Second Chechen War served as the rationale for continued empowerment of the state security apparatus and exploitation of public media forums to meet state security goals. The second period coincided with the “Color Revolutions” of 2003-2005 and NATO’s fifth and largest round of post-Cold War expansion into Eastern Europe and the Baltics. During the final period of examination, the five-day war with Georgia in August 2008 transmitted a signal across the Eurasian RSC that Russia reserved the right to act militarily to protect its perceived interests. These three crises influenced Russian foreign policy in relation to the Near Abroad and the West as its most significant other after 2008.

The Second Chechen War

From mid-1999, the Chechen incursion into the restive province of neighboring Dagestan fueled the increasing “momentum on both sides for a return to conflict.”⁹ Radical Islamic Wahhabist fighters joined Chechen guerillas “recruited and funded from

⁷ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium,” 228-234.

⁸ Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium,” 228.

⁹ Hughes, James. “Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict.” *Civil Wars* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 11–48, 34.

abroad,” transforming the conflict from a guerrilla war to a terrorist insurgency aimed at “soft targets” in Russia. The remilitarization of the conflict occurred as Shamil Basayev and “his Saudi ally, Umar Ibn al-Khattab” attempted to usurp Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov’s moderate nationalism and replace it with “expansionist jihadism.”¹⁰

Daghestanis “generally sided with the Russian government” against Basaev’s and Khattab’s “alien and radical brand of Islam.” The growing unrest in Chechnya along with Primakov’s dissension with Russian military action there likely served as “two major issues that propelled [Putin] to the Kremlin.”¹¹ Beginning in September 1999, apartment bombings in Moscow killed over 220 civilians as a rash of other terrorist attacks swept Russia. Evidence exists that the Russian state may have been at least complicit in these attacks based on the presence of military-grade hexogen explosive material at some of the nine explosion scenes. According to “circumstantial evidence,” it is plausible that “Russian secret services” may have intentionally orchestrated the bombings to stoke Russian public anger against Chechnya.¹² Subsequent investigations by a specialized Duma Commission set up specifically to investigate the attacks foundered as several Duma members themselves perished under suspicious circumstances. As Van Herpen elaborates, it was clear to other Duma members wishing to explore the bombings that it was “extremely dangerous to air critical opinions on the events.”¹³ Despite efforts by a small group of journalists and outside observers to investigate further, all of the attacks were blamed on Chechen insurgents or their compatriots. In his memoirs, Boris Yeltsin labeled allegations of any state complicity in the bombings as “blasphemous theories” and “falsehoods.”¹⁴

The terrorist attacks served as explosive triggers for the Second Chechen War. Russian military operations commenced with a destructive aerial campaign in late September 1999 followed by an intensive ground invasion in October. Chechnya’s

¹⁰ Van Herpen, Marcel H. *Putin’s Wars: The Rise of Russia’s New Imperialism*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2014), 176.; Hughes, James. “Chechnya: The Causes of a Protracted Post-Soviet Conflict.” *Civil Wars* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 11–48, 35-36.

¹¹ Rumer, Eugene B., and Richard D. Sokolsky. “U.S.-Russian Relations: Toward a New Strategic Framework.” *Strategic Forum, Institutes for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University* 192 (May 2002): 1–7, 1. 1.

¹² Cornell, Svante E. “The War Against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction.” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 167–84, 177.

¹³ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 180.

¹⁴ Yeltsin, Boris. *Midnight Diaries*. (New York: Public Affairs, Perseus Book Group, 2000), 343.

political instability and quest for independence were viewed as intolerable conditions for Russia given the regional economic importance as a critical Caspian oil transit point between Russia and Eastern Europe. Russia's Foreign Policy Concept for 2000 omitted specific reference to Chechnya. Instead, Russia emphasized its intent to control the "military-political rivalry among regional powers, the growth of separatism, ethnic-national and religious extremism."¹⁵

The terrorist attacks and the Dagestani incursion resulted in Putin's justification for tightening internal security efforts within Russia and delivering severe military retribution on Chechnya. The attacks themselves solidified the Russian populace's previously flagging resolve to rein in Chechen insurgents. Bolstered by the Russian government's rhetoric and widespread media attention "which readily blamed the explosions on 'Chechen terrorists,'" Putin harnessed anti-Chechen sentiment. Using lessons partially derived from observations of NATO's March-June 1999 air campaign in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Russia initially relied on heavy, though extremely imprecise, bombardment of Chechnya to minimize "heavy [Russian military] casualties." Aside from the use of airpower, however, the lessons of Operation ALLIED FORCE ended there. Russia intentionally unleashed a "massive bombing campaign" against the Chechen civilian population with tacit Russian public support founded on the intensification of racial ardor against the Chechen population in the wake of the aforementioned terrorist attacks.¹⁶

Within a month, Russia committed military ground forces to a renewed Chechnya invasion. Labeling this second Chechen War as a *kontraterroristskaya operatsiya* (counter-terrorist operation or KTO), the Russian military executed "more violent and ruthless" operations than the first 1994-1996 campaign.¹⁷ By the summer of 2001, the second conflict exceeded the first's duration, number of military and civilian casualties, and human rights abuses perpetrated against Chechen civilians.¹⁸ Whereas Yeltsin's first war was executed using Russian conscripts against highly motivated Chechen insurgents,

¹⁵ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 January 2000. <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/1e5f0de28fe77fdcc32575d900298676/36aba64ac09f737fc32575d9002bbf31!OpenDocument>

¹⁶ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 189.

¹⁷ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 187.

¹⁸ Cornell, Svante E. "The War Against Terrorism and the Conflict in Chechnya: A Case for Distinction." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 167-84, 172.

the second war utilized contract soldiers (*kontraktniki*) and elite Russian Special Forces (*Spetsnaz*) to prosecute widespread purge operations (*zachistki*). From the winter of 1999 to the official end of the war in 2009, small six-to-nine men Russian teams increasingly adopted intimidation tactics against the Chechen population including “summary executions, torture, arson, and looting.”¹⁹

As Cornell elaborates, initiation and conduct of the 1999 war was much different than the 1994 conflict, with Chechen forces “dispersed under the influence of field commanders that seldom coordinate their efforts and are often at odds with each other.”²⁰ Coupled with this dispersion and possibly a lack of Chechen popular support, radical Islamist elements within Chechnya served as a viable method of attracting foreign fighters and funding as “the only option available to Chechen rebels to attract the desperately needed foreign assistance.” The net effect of Chechen and Russian military actions transformed a nationalist-separatist campaign to a justifiable war on terror, initially enhancing Russian public support for the war. The early popularity of the war ensured Putin’s electoral victory by a wide margin in 2000 and boosted the Russian military’s prestige, funding, and credibility.

The Russian military’s “quasi-institutionalized practices” during these operations and widespread allegations of war crimes are beyond the scope of this discussion. What is most important is that Putin and military leaders justified conduct of the war as an absolute necessity in order to keep it “short and [Russian] casualties...low.”²¹ By 2003, the war met neither of these criteria. Exact statistics on the number of casualties in Chechnya remain murky but various sources indicate the Russian military sustained a number of casualties comparable to those suffered in the first war.

In October 2003, Russian military operations shifted to the war’s second phase. Putin moved to “Chechenize” the war by appointing Russian loyalist Akhmad Kadyrov as the Chechen President. After this date, the war was increasingly characterized as an internal struggle rather than a Russian orchestrated conflict. This transformation allowed Putin to ameliorate international criticism of the ethic nature of the war as Kadyrov continued a “more focused” version of *zachistki*. As the number of civilian casualties

¹⁹ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 191.

²⁰ Cornell, “The War Against Terrorism,” 173.

²¹ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 192-195.

went down, Moscow financed rebuilding Grozny. After Kadyrov was assassinated in a bomb blast during a Victory Day parade in Grozny's football stadium, Alu Alkhanov served as Chechen president. Kadryov's son, Ramzan, was promoted to first deputy premier of Chechnya in October 2004.

When Ramzan Kadryov reached the minimum age of 30 in February 2007, Putin installed him as President in place of Alkhanov.²² From that date forward, Kadryov maintained a "special relationship" with Putin which allowed him to build his own "feared militia" and maintain control of Chechnya through a "climate of terror."²³ Russia declared an official conclusion to operations in Chechnya in April 2009, leaving in place Kadryov with his militia along with "almost complete autonomy by declarations of loyalty" to Moscow and Putin.²⁴ In return for loyalty and end of the war, Moscow funded rebuilding efforts while simultaneously allowing Kadryov to become fabulously wealthy and independently powerful.²⁵ Figures vary widely as to the number of Chechen civilian casualties during the war but van Herpen provides an estimate of between 150,000 and 200,000 for both Chechen wars, equating to the death of approximately "15 to 20 percent" of the entire indigenous Chechen population.²⁶ Even more disturbing is the disproportionate civilian death toll in relation to the number of Chechen fighter killed – "for each killed Chechen fighter the Russians killed nine to ten Chechen civilians."²⁷ At the end of Putin's second term as President in 2008, he labeled Chechnya as a "full-fledged region within the Russian Federation" complete with "democratic parliamentary and presidential elections" and a "regional constitution."²⁸ Despite such rhetoric, Freedom House pointed to "noncompetitive...parliamentary elections" and Kadryov's "tightened...grip on power in 2008" as symbols of Chechnya's "Not Free" status.²⁹

²² Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty. "The Unstoppable Rise Of Ramzan Kadyrov," 19 Jan 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/profile-ramzan-kadyrov-chechnya-russia-putin/26802368.html>

²³ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 196.

²⁴ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 196.

²⁵ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty. "The Unstoppable Rise Of Ramzan Kadyrov," 19 Jan 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/profile-ramzan-kadyrov-chechnya-russia-putin/26802368.html>

²⁶ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 199.

²⁷ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 200.

²⁸ Putin, Vladimir. "Speech at Expanded Meeting of the State Council on Russia's Development Strategy through to 2020," The Kremlin, February 8, 2008.

http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/02/08/1137_type82912type82913_159643.shtml

²⁹ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World: Chechnya, 2009"

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2009/chechnya#.VT0acXIFDIU>

Terrorism and The Oligarchs – Putin’s Remedy = Enhanced State Control

After 2001, Chechen extremists directed their attacks against Russian soft targets beyond Chechen territory. Mark Kramer points out that, in fact, “the first major terrorist attack against a civilian target in Russia occurred in May 2002 when Chechen extremists detonated a shrapnel-filled IED” which “killed 45 bystanders (mostly children and elderly people).”³⁰ Between October 2002 and August 2004, Chechen-affiliated terrorists took 980 hostages in Moscow’s Dubrovka Theater, bombed a commuter train and the Moscow subway, and detonated bombs on two Moscow-bound commercial aircraft flights.³¹ In the case of the Dubrovka Theater, heavy-handed “elite Russian troops” stormed the theater, killing the attackers as well as 129 civilian hostages.³² The most severe attack occurred in September 2004 when Chechen and Ingush separatists stormed Beslan School No. 1 in Russia’s North Ossetia region. Like the Dubrovka theater attack, Russian special forces assumed control of the school, killing 330 hostages including 180 children.³³

Putin utilized the Beslan siege (often characterized as “Russia’s 9-11”) to strengthen his stance against the Chechen rebels as a fight against international terrorism. Since Beslan, Kremlin messaging persistently portrayed the Russian fight against Chechen separatism as “absolutely identical” to the threat faced by the west against al Qaeda. This final attack at Beslan following Putin’s overwhelming 2004 electoral victory strengthened his justification for continuing to rescind democratic reforms initiated during Yeltsin’s tenure. Safety and security assumed primacy while freedoms risked Russian governmental stability. As the 2004 elections testified, Putin secured popularity across Russian society for “his decisive handling of the Beslan hostage incident.”³⁴ After Beslan, Putin steadily introduced *vertikalni vlasti* (“vertical of power”) policies, gradually centralizing power in his hands while working “to suppress or co-opt

³⁰ Kramer, Mark. “The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia’s War in Chechnya.” *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter -2005 2004): 5–63, 50.

³¹ Kramer, Mark. “The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia’s War in Chechnya.” *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter -2005 2004): 5–63, 54.

³² Heaney, Dominic, ed. *The Territories of the Russian Federation*. 14th ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 24.

³³ Heaney, *The Territories of the Russian Federation*, 54.

³⁴ Jost, Kenneth. “Russia and the Former Soviet Republics.” *Congressional Quarterly Inc., Global Issues*, May 28, 2004, 257–279, 274.

all independent sources of power in state and society.”³⁵ His methods for consolidating domestic controls centered on enhancing the authority and size of the federal security services while tightening state political and media control.

Since his first election in 2000, Putin worked to transform Yeltsin’s methods of ruling through the oligarchs within a political, economic, and social system “fraught with corruption and lawlessness.”³⁶ As the boom in global oil prices transformed Yeltsin-era oligarchs from multimillionaires to billionaires, the Kremlin’s coffers expanded based on increased tax revenues.³⁷ Increased revenue allowed Putin to strengthen authorities invested in “policemen, prosecutors, and above all the FSB (Federal Security Service).”³⁸ These were the so-called *siloviki* (powerful) who formed the nucleus of Putin’s state security apparatus. Putin increasingly relied on these siloviki to preserve social stability as well as help reign in the oligarchs. The arrest and imprisonment of one of Russia’s wealthiest and most outspoken oligarchs, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, serves as an important testament to Putin’s renewed emphasis on internal stability through the control of natural energy resources and management of the wealthy oligarchs.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky was one of the prime movers within Russia’s “oil miracle” recovery. After 1998, Russia’s economic recovery gathered traction amidst the rapid rebound in global oil prices. This recovery included a renewed wave of modernization and consolidation within the Russian oil industry. This revitalization gathered steam just as Putin’s rise to the top of the Kremlin culminated. Khodorkovsky, like many of his fellow oligarchs, grew wealthy as the owner and chairman of Yukos, an oil company born during oil industry privatization between 1992 and 1998. The Russian government maintained state control of the oil giants Rosneft and Lukoil during the tumultuous 1990s, while most other oil concerns were privatized.³⁹

Having barely survived 1998’s economic disaster, Khodorkovsky’s company Yukos successfully combined with the Franco-American oil service company Schlumberger in October of that year. This was an unprecedented arrangement in the

³⁵ Lemaitre, Roemer. “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan.” *Review of Central and East European Law*, no. 31 (2006): 369–411, 370.

³⁶ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 371

³⁷ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 274.

³⁸ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 275.

³⁹ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 98.

Russian oil industry. After signing a “five-year strategic agreement” with the western company, Khodorkovsky proceeded to leverage western technical expertise, personnel, and management techniques designed to rapidly resuscitate Yukos’s “declining [oil] fields.”⁴⁰ While the state-run companies were loath to antagonize “the traditional norms of the Soviet era” still present in the emergent post-Soviet statist system, Khodorkovsky bucked that system. He succeeded in maintaining his “total independence” from the state while changing the “internal culture” of Yukos into a leading producer.⁴¹ At the end of 2002, the Yukos oil company was by far the leading producer of Russian crude oil with an output of 70 million metric tons compared to Rosneft’s 15 million metric tons.⁴² Yukos symbolized the apparent “unstoppable” growth of Russia’s private oil companies as they broke global stock market expectations “almost daily.”⁴³ Riding this tidal wave, Mikhail Khodorkovsky was coined “Russia’s richest man” by Forbes, having amassed a personal fortune of eight billion USD.⁴⁴ Khodorkovsky’s vast private wealth built on an intense pursuit of an “extreme version of laissez-faire capitalism” including an “idealized picture of the United States” placed him on a collision trajectory with Putin’s coercive instruments of state power.⁴⁵

During a February 2003 meeting of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the “oligarchs’ lobby,” Khodorkovsky personally chided state corruption and unsuccessfully attempted to convince Putin of the need for a privately financed Yukos pipeline to China.⁴⁶ Putin directly opposed this. Instead, he favored an alternative state-run plan for Transneft’s construction of a pipeline to the Pacific. Khodorkovsky’s outspoken manner bolstered rumors of political aspirations fueled by “Yukos’s support for opposition parties, [his] pro-American stance...,” and his preference for funding nongovernmental organizations. By October 2003, Khodorkovsky piqued Putin’s anger based on his “open contempt for state officials” and public criticism of “a dozen sensitive [state] issues ranging from taxes to foreign

⁴⁰ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 201.

⁴¹ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 230.

⁴² Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, Table 5.1, 195.

⁴³ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 229.

⁴⁴ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 229.

⁴⁵ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 277-280.

⁴⁶ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 291-293.

policy.”⁴⁷ In a dramatic arrest, an elite unit of the FSB surrounded his personal aircraft during a refueling stop in Novosibirsk, placed him in handcuffs and a hood, and transported him back to Moscow where he remains imprisoned today. His May 2005 trial was “widely deemed unfair” but demonstrated to other oligarchs that conformity and cooperation with Putin’s state instruments were preferable to competition or opposition to them.⁴⁸ After the September 2004 Beslan attacks, Putin justified expansion of presidential powers which had the added benefit of tightening state controls over the oligarchs. These powers increasingly limited the role of other regional and federal actors who might oppose his policies.

Extensive limitations on political activities included the abolition of elections for regional officials and sweeping federally-mandated electoral reforms.⁴⁹ Nationally, Putin introduced “seven federal districts” led by presidential appointees while enhancing his own power to “disband regional assemblies” and repeal any legislation not commensurate with federally imposed law.⁵⁰ Further enhancing his control at the federal level, Putin’s political party *Edinaya Rossia* (United Russia) clenched electoral victory in 2003 Duma elections based on widespread state media control and election irregularities. As the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reported after monitoring these elections, Putin’s United Russia party secured a “commanding majority” of votes based on “blurred” distinctions between the party and “executive administration.” Putin’s control of “countrywide State broadcasters” widely favored only his party while independent media outlets were shuttered or subsumed by the state.⁵¹ Other legal impositions followed these elections.

The Kremlin introduced and implemented Federal Law’s No. 168 and 51, consolidating power within a “new electoral system” favoring Putin’s United Russia and “other pro-Kremlin parties.”⁵² Putin’s Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov, has consistently vocalized the need for the Kremlin to maintain

⁴⁷ Gustaffson, *Wheel of Fortune*, 300-301.

⁴⁸ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 373.

⁴⁹ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 370.

⁵⁰ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 372.

⁵¹ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. “Russian Federation Elections to the State Duma, 7 December 2003, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report.” Warsaw, 27 January 2004. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia>

⁵² Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 383.

“paternalistic concern” for civil society. Widely considered “Russia’s second most powerful politician,” Surkov serves as the source of many of Putin’s policies aimed at preventing the rise of any opposition or the spread of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations in Russia.⁵³ Rather than strengthening the role of the state as a protector of civil society since 2004, Beslan’s “bloodshed” afforded Putin “new opportunities to expand the powers of the President.”⁵⁴

According to Freedom House’s annual reporting from 2001 forward, Putin’s “consolidation of central government authority” intensified markedly after Beslan.⁵⁵ The Russian political and social environment was downgraded from “Partially Free” in 2004 to “Not Free” for the first time in 2005 based on the “virtual elimination of influential political opposition parties within the country and the further concentration of executive power.”⁵⁶ Labeling the March 2008 presidential election “neither free nor fair,” Freedom House highlighted Putin’s continued manipulation of the electoral process allowing him to retain power as the new prime minister as part of the diarchy with his “designated successor – Dmitry Medvedev.”⁵⁷ In November and December 2008, the diarchy moved quickly to introduce the first amendments to the constitution since its introduction in 1993. As part of these efforts, the presidential term was increased from four to six years, “further strengthening the power of the executive branch.” In each year since then, the Kremlin intensified internal pressure against opposition groups, increased control over the oligarchs and thus the economy, and introduced laws silencing media criticism and freedom of speech.⁵⁸ Besides the impositions of enhanced domestic controls within Russian society since Putin’s rise in 2000, external factors also influenced Putin’s actions within the Eurasian RSC.

Russian Electoral Reforms After the Color Revolutions of 2003-2005

⁵³ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 391-394.

⁵⁴ Lemaitre, “The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan,” 373.

⁵⁵ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Russia, 2001”,

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2001/russia#.VT0IuHlFDIU>

⁵⁶ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Russia, 2005”,

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/russia#.VT0JX3lFDIU>

⁵⁷ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Russia, 2009”,

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2009/russia#.VT0Ne3lFDIU>

⁵⁸ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Russia, 2006 – 2015”,

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/russia#.VT0MWHlFDIU>

On Russia’s periphery, events in two of the most important post-Soviet countries further disturbed Putin’s impressions of the West. From 2003 to 2005, three successive “Color Revolutions” occurred: the 2003 “Rose Revolution” in Georgia; the 2004 “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine; and the 2005 “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan. In Georgia, the government of Eduard Shevardnadze was replaced by that of Mikhail Saakashvili. Both leaders displayed pro-Western proclivities, with Shevardnadze vocalizing support for NATO membership. Following contested elections, Russia sided with Shevardnadze as the most pliable possibility for Russian cooption. After Shevardnadze “conceded...defeat,” however, US-educated Saakashvili won the elections, garnering support from US President George W. Bush as an “emblem of the rise of democratic values.”⁵⁹

Before the dust settled after the Georgia elections, the “Orange Revolution” swept across Ukraine in 2004. The Kremlin dedicated money and political advisors to strengthen incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych in the lead up to the presidential elections.⁶⁰ After two rounds of voting, Viktor Yushchenko won election despite OSCE’s reporting of widespread voting irregularities. Millions of Ukrainian citizens peacefully protested against “evidence of fraud in the second round vote,” with Yanukovych initially declared the winner.⁶¹ Despite this fraud, the “Orange Revolution” succeeded in validating Yushchenko’s victory, leaving “the Kremlin deeply shaken.”⁶²

The following year, the “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan in February and March helped end the 14-year rule of President Askar Akayev “following seriously flawed parliamentary elections.”⁶³ Similar to the Rose and Orange Revolutions, the Kremlin attributed “western-sponsored NGOs” to the protests.⁶⁴ But unlike the earlier revolutions, Moscow attributed the revolution as much to “ethnic tensions” and “poverty” as outside interference. In short, the Rose and Orange Revolutions appeared more

⁵⁹ Wilson, Jeanne L. “The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy.” *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2 (April 2010): 21–36, 28.

⁶⁰ Wilson, “The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy,” 29.

⁶¹ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Ukraine, 2005”, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/ukraine#.VT0-QHIFDIU>

⁶² Wilson, “The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy,” 29.

⁶³ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World: Kyrgyzstan, 2006”,

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2006/kyrgyzstan#.VT1B03lFDIU>

⁶⁴ Wilson, “The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy,” 29.

dangerous to Russia than the Tulip Revolution based on the pro-Western, democratic nature of the political players and broad public appeal. The new leaders of Georgia and Ukraine indicated their intentions to seek NATO membership, representing an intolerable threat to Russia.

Putin and Russian policy elites consistently viewed the Color Revolutions as mechanisms devised by the United States to undermine pro-Russian regional governments through foreign-influenced, pro-Western NGO's and youth movements.⁶⁵ In his appraisal of the influence of the Color Revolutions on Putin's policies, Wilson highlighted the Kremlin's fixation on "foreign support for local democratic movements" and "mobilized social movements" as primary factors in contesting elections in Georgia and Ukraine.⁶⁶ Fearing the possibility of similar revolutions within Russia, Putin introduced legislation in the Russian Duma from April 2006 to July 2008 placing ever tighter restrictions on extant NGOs in Russia. Beginning with the "NGO Law" implemented in 2007, organizations receiving foreign funding were placed "under greater scrutiny" and banned from political activities if they received foreign funding.⁶⁷ As restrictions intensified against NGO's, the Kremlin developed a second line of attack against popular internal opposition based on its interpretation of the role of youth movement *Kmara* and *Pora* in Georgia and Ukraine respectively.

After Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004, Putin acted to counter creation of such movements in Russia. His key aid, Vladislav Surkov, enrolled another key presidential administration functionary, Vasily Yakemenko, as leader of a new "pro-Kremlin youth movement" *Nashi* (Us) in 2005.⁶⁸ Founded on an extant youth group created four months after Putin's election, Yakemenko transformed the pro-Putin "fan club" *Idushchie Vmeste* (Walking Together) into a nation-wide youth organization designed to counter a "Ukrainian-style Orange Revolution in Russia."⁶⁹ Modelled on the Soviet era *Komsomol* youth movement complete with *kommissars* as youth leaders, *Nashi*'s primary objective was to support the "nondemocratic, autocratic power elite."⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," 22.

⁶⁶ Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," 22.

⁶⁷ Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," 23.

⁶⁸ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 124.

⁶⁹ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 135-136.

⁷⁰ Lemaitre, "The Rollback of Democracy in Russia after Beslan," 396; Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 125.

Funding for the group's activities was underwritten by the Kremlin and the state-controlled natural gas company, Gazprom.⁷¹ Surkov highlighted the group's key role in bolstering popular support for the Kremlin, helping secure 2007 parliamentary election victories. The youth organization matured into an "ultranationalist, paramilitary organization" through 2008.⁷² After successful manipulation of the 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections, the Kremlin gradually attempted to depoliticize the youth group's orientation moving it towards "innovation and scientific-technical creativity."⁷³

Like the Soviet-era uprisings in East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, the Color Revolutions instilled fear that the Russian Federation itself may be imminently susceptible to such turmoil. Putin had no intention of allowing this to happen but, like Gorbachev and Yeltsin, remained wary of threatening or using force to calm any domestic disturbances. Instead, he tightened control over Russian parliamentary and presidential electoral processes to silence any potential opposition. On the eve of the aforementioned 2007-2008 Russian elections, Putin decried efforts by some Western countries (i.e. the United States) to transform the "OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries."⁷⁴ In an attempt to prevent the OSCE ODIHR from monitoring both elections, he restricted the number of election observers in the parliamentary elections to only 70 personnel, a decrease from 450 observers in 2003. After Putin accused the OSCE of serving at the behest of the US State Department, he again restricted the number of invited OSCE observers for the March 2008 presidential elections. The OSCE subsequently refused to send observers, leaving a "handpicked slate of friendly observers" from the CIS and the SCO.⁷⁵

NATO Expansion

During Yeltsin's decade in power, Russia indicated a desire to join NATO and remain unopposed to the alliance's expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. This

⁷¹ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 125.

⁷² Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 136.

⁷³ Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," 24.

⁷⁴ Putin, Vladimir. "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," February 10, 2007.

http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138_type82912type82914type82917type84779_118123.shtml

⁷⁵ Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy," 25.

changed after 1993-1994 as Yeltsin's foreign policy shifted from a primary emphasis on enhancing relations with the West to strengthening ties within the CIS. In apparent contradiction to his statist shift, Russia joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994, signed the NATO Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security in May 1997, and established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC).⁷⁶ After Putin's election in 2000, and particularly after 9/11 attacks on the United States, Russia's relations with NATO "became more accommodating" despite Russia's temporary protestations over NATO air strikes in the Former Yugoslavia. After the 2004 round of NATO expansion into post-Soviet spaces, "Moscow's approach towards NATO became again increasingly assertive."⁷⁷ Despite establishing the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in May 2002 to further formalize the PJC, relations have remained lukewarm based on a persistent belief by Moscow that NATO is encroaching on Russia's sphere of interest vis-à-vis former Soviet countries in Eastern and Central Europe. Figure 5.1 provides a snapshot of the six NATO expansion efforts since NATO's inception.



Digital Collections

⁷⁶ NATO, "NATO Relations with Russia."

⁷⁷ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 54.



Figure 7: Seven Phases of NATO Expansion

*Source: Reprinted From: Council on Foreign Relations,
http://i.cfr.org/content/publications/NATO_Map_FINAL.jpg*

Since NATO's 1995 release of its "Study on NATO Enlargement," Russia has remained sensitive to the alliance's expansion into areas it deemed vital for preservation of its own security within former Warsaw Pact countries. After the study's release, NATO formally invited the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to join the alliance during the 1997 Madrid Summit. They became the first former Warsaw Pact members in 1999. In quick succession, NATO launched a second initiative during its 1999 Washington Summit - the "Membership Action Plan (MAP)." Designed to "help other aspirant countries prepare for possible membership," the MAP enticed other former Warsaw Pact members to join the alliance.⁷⁸ As Russia continued to struggle economically and politically through the end of Yeltsin's tenure, the Kremlin had limited leverage over its former satellites aside from energy subsidization and continued "soft power" support for the Russian diaspora living there.

As part of Russia's 2000 "Foreign Policy Conception (FPC) of the Russian Federation" approved by Putin, Russia acknowledged a "realistic appreciation" for NATO's role as a cooperative security alliance. Espousing continued support for the 1997 Founding Act establishing "mutual relations, cooperation, and security" with NATO, the FPC also articulated Russian discontent. On the heels of NATO's first

⁷⁸ NATO, "NATO Enlargement," 12 June 2014. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49212.htm

expansion into Russia's RSC and NATO airstrikes against the FRY, the FPC stated bluntly that "NATO's present-day political and military guidelines do not accord with the security interests of the Russian Federation."⁷⁹ This underscored Primakov's immediate reaction to the air war in March 1999 – temporary nullification of the Founding Act and retraction from the Permanent Joint Council. Despite the articulation of disapproval with NATO's policy, Putin moved to a conciliatory stance with NATO from 2000 to 2004. Rather than elevating tensions, Putin emphasized resuscitating the Russian economy and cooperating with the West and NATO as "the best means to this end."⁸⁰ After 2004, however, Putin's language towards NATO became increasingly assertive. As it became apparent to the Kremlin that NATO expansion would continue regardless of Russian dissent, Russia's foreign policy carried strong objections to further westward movement.

NATO extended invitations to seven Central and Eastern European countries to join the alliance at the 2002 Prague Summit. These countries included all three of the Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) as well as Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania. All seven countries participated in MAP processes and were successfully accepted into the alliance shortly before NATO's 2004 Istanbul Summit. As the fifth and largest round of expansion since NATO's inception, this expansion exacerbated tension between Putin and the West just as Russian anxiety peaked with regard to the Color Revolutions mentioned above. Putin often mentioned cooperation and continued participation in the NRC, yet Russian anxiety and fear of further loss of prestige within Eurasia skewed the Kremlin's reality.

What remained was a fundamental "mismatch" between "rhetoric...and actual cooperation," indicating an "ambivalent approach to the NRC."⁸¹ The combined effect of the Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine with NATO expansion translated to Putin's use of increasingly assertive language against the West, the OSCE, and NATO after 2004. In his Munich Security Conference Speech of February 2007, Putin labelled NATO expansion as a "serious provocation that reduces the level of trust."⁸² In addition, Putin railed against the "pitiable condition" of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces

⁷⁹ "Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation", 99 in Melville and Shakleina

⁸⁰ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 73.

⁸¹ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 76.

⁸² Putin, "Munich Security Conference Speech", February 10, 2007.

in Europe (CFE) and the use of the OSCE for foreign policy promotion through “so-called non-governmental organisations.”⁸³

In particular, the Kremlin adamantly opposed any further expansion closer to its border, demonstrating particular sensitivity to continued questions of Georgian and Ukrainian accession to the alliance.⁸⁴ In a further break with NATO, Putin unilaterally decreed Russia’s withdrawal from the CFE on 13 July 2007.⁸⁵ This action reduced treaty control governing the deployment of Russian heavy military equipment into and through the Russian Southern Military District (and all others close to Europe), including the North Caucasus (see Figure 5.2). Treaty suspension essentially lifted restrictions on Russian military force posturing, eventually facilitating preemptive operations in its war with Georgia.⁸⁶



Figure 8: The Russian Federation’s Military Districts

Source: Reprinted From: *Stratfor Geopolitical Diary*,
<https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/russia-reminds-world-it-still-has-military>

The Georgia War 2008

After Georgia’s November 2003 “Rose Revolution,” relations between Moscow and Tbilisi varied from conciliation to open disagreement over the final status of Georgia’s South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. After the Soviet Union’s dissolution, both provinces expressed intentions to secede from Georgia. Since the early 1990s, Russia facilitated such tension through its provision of Russian passports to the ethnic

⁸³ Putin, “Munich Security Conference Speech”, February 10, 2007.

⁸⁴ Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy*, 75.

⁸⁵ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 210.

⁸⁶ Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 210.

Russians there. Internationally, Moscow grew increasingly frustrated with NATO expansion efforts and its perception that the Kremlin's regional role remained unrecognized. In addition, Russia continued to maintain its "perceived obligation" to protect any Russians living in any former Soviet republic.

From Georgia's perspective, Tbilisi grew incensed with Moscow's "unwillingness to honor Georgia's independence" and its attendant "foreign policy orientation."⁸⁷ Additionally, both Georgia and Ukraine approached NATO regarding the potential steps needed to join the alliance. Despite these efforts, France and Germany denied Georgia a NATO Membership Action Plan at NATO's April 2008 Bucharest Summit. During and after this event, US President George W. Bush emphasized unequivocal US support for accession to the alliance, regardless of any Russian threats.⁸⁸ Tensions between Russia and Georgia intensified until the eve of the war on 7 August 2008.

Russia, likely sensing its "vulnerability and isolation" based on NATO advances into its "sphere of interests," opted to enhance cooperative efforts with the erstwhile breakaway republics. Georgia interpreted such actions as Russian de facto annexation of the two regions.⁸⁹ According to Tsygankov, it is plausible that Western recognition of Kosovo's independence in February 2008 emboldened South Ossetia and Abkhazia (figure 5.3) to press harder for independence from Georgia. Russia may have found it increasingly difficult to "resist recognizing their independence claims."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 245.

⁸⁸ Baker, Peter. "Bush Pressing NATO to Set Membership Path for Ukraine, Georgia." 2 April, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/01/AR2008040100686.html>

⁸⁹ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 211.

⁹⁰ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 250



Figure 9: Map of Georgia with Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Source: Reprinted From: United Kingdom, Houses of Parliament, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmdefence/276/27606.htm>

Tensions escalated in April and May after Russia shot down a Georgian military drone operating over Abkhazia.⁹¹ This was followed by the Russian dispatch of “unarmed railroad troops” in Abkhazia to repair the only rail link between Georgia and Russia.⁹² As the situation deteriorated through June and July 2008, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Tbilisi “to demonstrate support for Georgia’s territorial integrity and the MAP” during a European trip but avoided visiting Moscow. This visit underscored US support for Georgia’s NATO aspirations and, combined with previous provisions of US economic and military assistance, may have provided a “sense of confidence in Tbilisi.”⁹³ In fact, Georgia was caught in the middle of a “partisan” dispute with Russia pressing for Abkhazia and South Ossetia against the US backing of the Georgian government.

In July, skirmishes between “Russian-commanded Ossetian troops” against “Georgian police” in “Georgian-controlled villages” led to the Russian deployment of the

⁹¹ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 243.

⁹² Van Herpen, *Putin’s Wars*, 213.

⁹³ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, 250.

58th Army through the Roki Tunnel into South Ossetia on 3 August.⁹⁴ Though the 2009 EU Tagliavini report blamed President Saakashvili with ordering the initiation of hostilities on 7 August 2008, Russia's earlier incursion violated Georgia's sovereignty based on previous agreements regarding troop deployments. Just prior to the outbreak of the war, Russia conducted Kavkaz-2008, a large joint force exercise including the Russian air force and the Black Sea Fleet. An estimated 60,000 of the 80,000 regular troops in the exercise also participated in the August war.⁹⁵ The five-day conflict achieved the limited Russian objectives of securing the two contested regions of Georgia, declaring them independent despite EU and NATO protestations. Importantly, Russia's closest great power ally, China, refused to recognize the independence of the two regions through its leadership in the SCO, "setting an example for the SCO's Central Asian members, who followed Beijing's lead."⁹⁶

The war in Georgia underscored Russia's intention to remain the primary regional power within its own limited RSC. Pointing to its significance, Jeffrey Mankoff termed the war "a turning point in Russia's dealings with the CIS."⁹⁷ As a demonstration of the emergent competitive nature between Russia and the West in Central and Eastern Europe, the war demonstrated Russia's intention and ability to use military power when necessary to protect sovereign interests despite international diplomatic protestations. Sensitive to potential unintended consequences, it seems clear Russia desired avoidance of direct confrontation with NATO and United States. Despite Putin's 2007 claim of Russia's desire to pursue "multilateral diplomacy" through adherence to "openness, transparency and predictability," its actions in Georgia demonstrated its intent to avoid such diplomacy and predictability within the RSC.⁹⁸ As a result of the war, NATO temporarily suspended normal NRC cooperation, resuming cooperative efforts again only in December 2009.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 213-214.

⁹⁵ Van Herpen, *Putin's Wars*, 219-220.

⁹⁶ Trenin, "Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?" in Aslund, Anders, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins, eds. *Russia After the Global Economic Crisis*. (Washington, D.C: Peterson Institute for International Economics, Center for Strategic and International Studies, New Economic School, 2010), 196.

⁹⁷ Mankoff, Jeffrey. *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*. (Lanham, Maryland: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 242.

⁹⁸ Putin, "Munich Security Conference Speech", February 10, 2007.

⁹⁹ NATO Relations with Russia: Milestones

After the NRC suspension and barely three weeks after the end of the brief war in Georgia, President Dmitry Medvedev conducted a brief interview with several Russian television channels. This was the first interview Medvedev conducted after Russia's unilateral recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence from Georgia. Medvedev offered his candid position on the five core themes of present and future Russian Foreign Policy. As Putin had done during the previous year's Munich Security Conference, his first two points specified the unacceptability of a unipolar international order (alluding to US power) and reiterated Russia's recognition of "the fundamental principles of international law." His third point alluded to Russia's consistent need to shape its identity and its aspirations for great power status beyond Eurasia vis-à-vis "friendly relations" with Europe and the United States. Finally, he articulated Russia's focus on relations with countries within and just beyond the CIS periphery. As an "absolute priority," Medvedev stated that Russia reserved the right to protect "life and dignity of Russian citizens 'wherever they are.'" This referred not only to the two Georgian regions but to the estimated 25 million other ethnic Russians living in Eastern and Central Europe. Finally, Medvedev emphasized its need to protect "privileged interests" in regions adjacent to Russia's "border states" and beyond if it deemed it appropriate.¹⁰⁰ Russia's war against Georgia thus served as a warning to other Near Abroad governments against any future attempts to bring Ukraine or other former Soviet republics into the NATO alliance.

Conclusion – Russia's Vulnerable Economy and Russia's Present Trajectory

Economic vulnerability, political dysfunction, and unilateral use of military force contribute to Russia's use of its near abroad to achieve "primacy in the former Soviet space" as a means of equalizing with the US and the EU in the Eurasian RSC.¹⁰¹ Rather than strengthening the relationship with the West, Putin has often discounted diplomacy in favor of strength-based tactics. Responses to domestic terrorism, unrest in Chechnya

¹⁰⁰ Medvedev, Sergei. "Interview Medvedev in Sochi, Russian TV Channel (10)", 31 Aug 2008. <http://ria.ru/politics/20080831/150827264.html#ixzz3XTkpiJRp>

¹⁰¹ Trenin, Dmitri. "Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?" in Aslund, Anders, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins, eds. *Russia After the Global Economic Crisis*. (Washington, D.C: Peterson Institute for International Economics, Center for Strategic and International Studies, New Economic School, 2010), 193.

and the North Caucasus, the Color Revolutions, and NATO expansion all contributed to steadily restrictive state controls over Russian social, economic, and political functions.

Imposition of these restrictions were commensurate with Putin's Plan, outlined by United Russia then-boss, Boris Gryzlov, in May 2007. As part of this plan, five priorities include re-emphasizing Russian culture, rebuilding the economy, improving living standards, strengthening Russian civil institutions, and building Russia's sovereign strength.¹⁰² During his final speech at the end of his first presidential term, Putin reaffirmed his desire to strengthen state institutions through constitutional legality with the espoused intention of promoting personal guarantees of freedom and security.¹⁰³ Dmitry Medvedev re-emphasized these priorities again during his inauguration to the Presidency on 7 May 2008. While these objectives appeared benign, the Medvedev-Putin diarchy continued to manage internal security through imposition of increased state control over personal freedoms and restrictions. Externally, national security considerations were bolstered by resurgent investment in conventional military capabilities as a strength-based instrument of projecting regional influence as demonstrated by the 2008 Georgia War.

Shortly after the conclusion of that war, the 2008-2009 global economic crisis again damaged Russia's resource-dependent economy. Still heavily reliant on the oil and natural gas export sectors for economic growth, the global drop in commodity prices precipitated an 8 percent drop in Russia's GDP in 2009. As a result, Russia was "more severely hit than any Group of Twenty (G-20) country."¹⁰⁴ Even though GDP increased progressively since Putin's first election in 2000 (see figure 5.x), the economy remained perpetually vulnerable to dramatic rises and falls in commodity prices for oil and natural gas.

¹⁰² Zakatnova, Anna. "Putin's Plan," (13 December 2007), *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, http://rbth.com/articles/2007/12/13/putin_plan.html

¹⁰³ Putin, Vladimir. "Speech at Expanded Meeting of the State Council on Russia's Development Strategy through to 2020", 8 February 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Trenin, "Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?" 189.



Figure 10: Rise in Russian GDP, 1992-2013 - Yeltsin through Putin
Source: Adapted From: Data Derived from International Monetary Fund, <http://www.imf.org>

Based on a dramatic rise in global energy prices from 2003 to 2008, Russia effectively used its oil and natural gas reserves as coercive tools to force the EU into paying market prices for its resources.¹⁰⁵ In order to achieve this goal, Russia twice denied natural gas export to Ukraine, suspending supplies in 2006 and 2009. Directing such coercion at Ukraine over payment and pricing disputes underscored Moscow's discontent with Western-focused Ukrainian foreign policy choices. Based on such tactics, Russia demonstrated its unreliability as an energy exporter and forced the EU to finally explore serious alternative energy solutions. Even as the EU remains dependent on Russian gas, over time Russia's ability to use energy as a weapon will likely be reduced based on inevitable competition for alternative energy solutions and avoidance of Russian sourcing.

During Medvedev's presidency from 2008 to 2012, Putin served as Medvedev's Prime Minister. Though Medvedev made minor course corrections, Putin maintained the primary leadership role in the Kremlin. In September 2011, on the eve of Duma elections, Medvedev announced his intention not to run for re-election so Putin could again campaign for president. During the state-controlled March 2012 elections, Putin was re-elected from a field of hand-selected, pro-diarchy opponents, presenting little

¹⁰⁵ Trenin, "Russian Foreign Policy: Modernization or Marginalization?" 192.

threat of serious opposition. Widespread popular opposition to the state-manipulated elections of September 2011 and March 2012 culminated with police violence against protestors opposing Putin's May 2012 inauguration. Other enhanced Kremlin restrictions followed: "Putin...pushed through new laws limiting the actions of NGOs, placing new restrictions on the internet, recriminalizing slander, and expanding the definition of treason to include a wide variety of activities in an effort to frighten the population into passivity."¹⁰⁶ Domestic controls over economic, social, and political functions complemented Putin's conception of Russia's role in regional and global affairs. Implications of these policies as articulated in Russia's 2013 Foreign Policy Concept will serve as the concluding section of the next chapter.



¹⁰⁶ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World – 2013, Russia," <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/russia#VUaJL3lFDIU>

Chapter 6

Foreign Policy Consistencies in Russia's Near Abroad

Russia has been defining itself as a standing great power with global reach. Its current ambition is to become a full-fledged world power, one of a handful of more or less equal key players in the twenty-first century.

- Dmitri Trenin, October 2009, “Russia’s Spheres of Interest, Not Influence”

In this chapter, security issues will serve as the cornerstone for examining Russian foreign policy consistencies in its relations with states in its near abroad from Stalin through Putin. As a starting point, a brief explanation is helpful in providing general signposts for realist and constructivist international relations theory applicable to Russia’s global and regional security issues. Elements from both concepts will be used to describe the utility of Buzan and Waever’s Regional Security Complex (RSC) Theory in outlining Russian foreign policy in the former Soviet Union’s (FSU) periphery during and after the Cold War. According to this “three-tiered” theory, superpowers and great powers exist at the system level while regional powers operate exclusively in their own territorial-based security complex. Born of the technology that facilitated campaigns spanning the globe during WWII, great powers became superpowers based on their global power projection capacity.¹ Superpowers are simultaneously great powers but are capable of acting across “any regional security complex whenever it suits their interests.”² Regional powers occupy the polar opposite of the power spectrum while great powers operate in the middle, possessing more capabilities than a regional power but less projection capability than a superpower. As its central tenet, the RSC theory (RSCT) espouses that “since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regional based clusters: security complexes.”³

With the FSU’s dissolution, Russia lost its status as a global superpower. Since then, Russian leaders attempted to rebuild its perceived position as the primary Eurasian great power with aspirations of regional hegemony as a precursor to superpower

¹ Buzan, Barry, and Ole Waever. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 33.

² Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 33.

³ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 4.

restoration. The RSCT is foundational to the application of Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier's Regional Powers and Security Framework (RPSF). This skeletal structure provides explanatory and descriptive utility for describing the transitional nature of Russia's regional security order from the end of the Cold War through President Vladimir Putin's release of the latest Russian Foreign Policy Concept in 2013. A key point is the steady "accentuation of the significance of the regional level for important security processes" as Russia descended from superpower status to a great power with aspirations of regional hegemony.⁴ Russia's maintenance of securitization issues within the RSC are foundational for rebuilding its regional and global power.

Structural Realism and Security in the International System

One of the central, timeless tenets within international relations (IR) theory is the competition for wealth and survival between independent states within an anarchical international system.⁵ From a realist perspective, independent actors are sovereign nation-states. In a state of anarchy, states act as unitary, sovereign equals. As a basic requirement of sovereignty, nation-states attempt to guarantee their own survival based on the absence of a central, higher government or organization to protect them. Because of the international system's anarchical nature, states must act based on the principle of individualist self-help. The system is most often dominated by major states as the principle actors who ultimately determine its structure.⁶ The major actors at the end of WWII were the Soviet Union and the United States, with other European powers assuming secondary roles.

Realism suggests the inevitability of competition and conflict between nation-states based on survival as the core requirement in an anarchical system. A security dilemma results between states when the relative power of one increases at the expense of another. As Gilpin points out: "...[as] the power of a group or state increases, that group or state will be tempted to try increase its control over its environment" and "will try to

⁴ Stewart-Ingwersoll, Robert, and Derrick Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework*. (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), 5.

⁵ Gilpin, Robert. *War and Change in World Politics*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 7.

⁶ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979), 91.

change the international system in accordance with its particular sets of interests”⁷ By the end of WWII, the international system transitioned from a multipolar nation-state system which always had more than five great powers to a bipolar arrangement dominated by two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States.⁸ Distinguished from their European great power predecessors, the Soviet Union and the United States ended the war with unmatched industrial capabilities, military might, and, most importantly, recognition by other nation-states based on their “special rights and duties” in the international system.⁹ During the Cold War, these two countries maintained the dominant or central balance of power in the world while many localized power arrangements existed across geographical regions (i.e. the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia).

With the Soviet Union’s rapid deterioration in 1989, the global balance of power shifted to a unipolar arrangement led by the United States. Yet, local balances of power endured. Based on its geography, its historical and cultural position within Eurasia, and its nuclear capabilities at the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation retained a tenuous grip on great power status within the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) created in 1991. Simultaneously, Russia lost influence in the international system and sought to arrest further erosion of its regional dominance through strength-based strategies. Initially, Russia led creation of multilateral regional organizations indicating the political will to encourage mutual cooperation and restraint. Yet, leaders shaping Russia’s early reform efforts never completely availed themselves of Russia’s power-based approach to regional order based on its inability to convince newly independent states of its true intentions. Material and economic issues remained central to Russia’s domination. While realism is mostly concerned with the presence or absence of material issues translating to relative power, constructivism helps explain Russia’s identity-crisis in the 1990s.

⁷ Gilpin, Robert. *War and Change in World Politics*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 94-95.

⁸ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979), 162-163.

⁹ Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society*. 4th ed. New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 194-199.

Constructivism and Security in the International System

The idea of national identity is central to IR constructivism theory. While realism assigns primacy to material power and interest as factors shaping a nation-state's identity and security considerations, constructivism assigns value to power and interest as functions of identity and shared ideas. Wendt's constructivist social theory describes the means by which "people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them."¹⁰ Within an anarchical, self-help international system, states attribute meanings to objects as hostile, neutral, complementary or friendly in relation to their own material economic or military power. In essence, Wendt states that "power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up."¹¹ Ideas give power and interest their assigned values. Based on these assigned values, adversary states act differently "toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not."¹² Following this reasoning, national identity is thus partially shaped by the actions of other nation-states.

Internal and external features contribute to a state's identity separate from its perception of friends or enemies. Internal features are a function of the unitary nature of sovereignty, acknowledging the implicit right of states to control all domestic issues within their own borders. External features shaping the state's identity are often based on self-preservation and national security.¹³ Insecurity in such a system is created when a state's actions are received as threats despite the best intentions, leading to potential mistrust. As a result, each state's identity is shaped based on competition and self-preservation, leading to emulation of the other's behavior to preserve its own security.¹⁴ Two states that are in competition with each other form their identities through mutual learning. In short, they influence each other's identities through preservation of their own security vis-à-vis the other state's posture towards them. In the superpower rivalry during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union bounded their national

¹⁰ Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 396.

¹¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 135.

¹² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 397.

¹³ Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425, 399.

¹⁴ Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," 406.

interests and shaped their identities based on an intersubjective appreciation of security considerations.

Once the Cold War ended, ideas shaping the interests and identities of the Soviet Union changed as its empire collapsed. The Yeltsin-Kozyrev foreign policy formulation hinged on attempts to recast a new Russian identity based on nascent liberal policies in its relations with the West. Instead of an adversarial, security-centric view of the United States and Europe, they attempted to merge the Russian “Self” with the Western “Other.” An eventual backlash ensued as broad swaths of Russian society suffered economic deprivation. While only some of the political elite reverted to nationalism and communism, all collectively shunned any further efforts to westernize.¹⁵ By the mid-1990s, Yeltsin realized that the new Russian identity, while still uncertain, would most likely not be completely commensurate with that of the West.¹⁶ NATO expansion and its unilateral actions in the Balkans triggered a gradual resistance to further integration with the West while domestic political considerations forced Yeltsin to establish new policy priorities. Security still shaped Russia’s identity but the “other” shifted from the United States to more geographically proximate threats within the former Soviet spaces. As the 1990s progressed, Russia’s dominant role within its own RSC gradually gained more importance as a foreign policy priority.

Global and Regional Levels of Soviet/Russian Foreign Policy

Two levels of international relations theory help explain the foreign policy actions undertaken by the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. At the macro or global level, Stalin and all of his successors through Brezhnev generally executed actions congruent with structural realism in their relations with Europe and the United States. These relations were predominantly informed by balance-of-power dynamics, shaping the bipolar global strategic landscape. This changed following Brezhnev’s death. Soviet Politburo leadership crises followed as Andropov and Chernenko ascended in succession to Party Secretary only to suffer from ill health and death, triggering Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise. After assuming leadership as the General Secretary of the CPSU in

¹⁵ Ziegler, Charles E. “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives.” *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (March 2012): 400–417, 404.

¹⁶ Ziegler, “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives,” 404.

1985, he steadily introduced *perestroika* and *glasnost*, both designed to reform social structures and demonstrate a willingness to allow limited personal freedoms. In addition, he commenced groundbreaking negotiations with President Ronald Reagan to diminish the threat of nuclear confrontation. Yet during his tenure, the Soviet economy stagnated as the military-industrial complex consumed a disproportionate share of national resources and funding while efforts to modernize industry and society languished.

As the Soviet Union's state structure transitioned from chaos to dissolution from 1989 to 1991, the state's security lost importance in favor of domestic reform and market liberalization. For a short time during President Boris Yeltsin's early tenure, Yeltsin and Kozyrev adopted liberal reform measures aimed at resuscitating the economy and regaining great power parity with the United States and Europe. As these policies foundered, Russian foreign policy shifted from global integration aimed at currying favor with the West to regional policies emphasizing the near abroad as the preeminent priority.

After 1994, Russian elites gradually felt estranged by the West as financial aid withered while NATO and the EU signaled their intention to expand. For the remainder of the decade, Russia steadily re-incorporated realist foreign policy perspectives aimed at reviving its security priorities within the post-Soviet space as an incremental means to regaining global stature. Yeltsin attempted to regain lost Soviet prestige and honor at a regional level as a foreign policy priority. From a regional perspective, the Russian Federation attempted to re-establish itself as the central power in a unipolar power structure extending into former Soviet states.

Applying the RSCT, this discussion will analyze the Soviet Union's regional actions within the Warsaw Pact following Stalin's death in 1953 until the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991. Once the bipolar superpower rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States ended, the dynamics of global and regional interaction changed. As the United States retained superpower status, the Russia Federation attempted to prevent regional power dissipation to other CIS states within the former Soviet security complex.

The European RSC during The Cold War – 1949-1989

During the Cold War, Europe consisted of one large Regional Security Complex which contained the western European countries, all of the Soviet Union and some southern peripheral regions in Central Asia. Overlaid on top of this RSC, Buzan and

Waever describe the global “bipolar overlay” which effectively divided the European RSC into two spheres of influence, each dominated by one of the two superpowers.

Western European countries remained US allies under the NATO umbrella. To the east of the Iron Curtain, countries from the German Democratic Republic and Poland in the north to Bulgaria in the south were subordinated to the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the state composition of RSCs on the Eurasian landmass grew uncertain with the “lifting of the overlay in Western and Central Europe and the retreat of a diminished global superpower status.”¹⁷

Stalin: The Creation of a Regional Security Complex During the Early Cold War

Before WWII, the global international system was dominated by five great powers. As Waltz points out, the war brought closure to the history of a three-century multipolar order in Europe. The new Cold War bipolar system was dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union following the destruction wrought on Japan and the European great powers. No challengers to this system emerged for the duration of the Cold War though China and Japan remained ambitious great powers.¹⁸ Additionally, the system itself was transformed from European-dominated system of great powers to an institutionalized international system with a global expanse.¹⁹

After the war, Stalin remained committed to two key international goals for the Soviet Union: first, regain and then maintain a buffer zone around its periphery; and second, achieve international recognition of its new status as a superpower on par with the United States. Even before the end of the war, Stalin’s military machine began fulfilling the first goal. With the violent occupation of Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary before 1944 ended, Stalin formed the skeleton of the future Warsaw Pact. Stalin’s attendance at Tehran to meet with Churchill and FDR in 1943 facilitated articulation of his unremitting goal of creating a securitized Soviet buffer zone. At Yalta in February 1945, Eastern Europe was effectively ceded to Stalin along with guarantees of future reparations from Germany should the Soviet Union agree to enter the war against Japan on its eastern flank. Stalin waited to initiate such an offensive until a few

¹⁷ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 351.

¹⁸ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 162.

¹⁹ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 33.

days after the first US atomic weapon was dropped on Hiroshima and three months after Victory in Europe Day, as he previously promised the Western allies.

The agreements made at war's end allowed the Soviet Union to become the dominant hegemon within Eastern and Central Europe. Stalin did not create a benevolent hegemonic order, however. Rather, he succeeded in creating "the most extreme form of hierarchical order....empire."²⁰ Stalin presided over this strength-based regional hegemony using force and coercion to preserve dominance over Soviet satellite states.²¹ As Ikenberry points out, rather than a singular post-war settlement based on one treaty to determine occupation and reparation strategies, two settlements determined the post-war order. The Cold War's bipolarity dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union served as one de facto settlement hallmarked by heavy militarization on both sides. In the other, the United States led the West and Japan through creation of a "dense set of new security, economic, and political institutions, almost all involving the United States."²² This settlement created balance-of-power dynamics pitting the Soviet bloc against the US-led institutionalized order.

The countries of Eastern Europe were never viewed by Stalin as equal powers. As such, Stalin never attempted to elicit cooperation for Soviet actions in Eastern Europe but he did consistently seek to stabilize Eastern European security. In addition, as a buffer zone implies, these countries fell under Soviet protection in order to prevent any future attempt by European powers to encroach on Soviet territory. Stalin had little concern for any perception of leadership across Eastern Europe – subjugation of these countries was what mattered. Subjugation facilitated Soviet custodianship and protectorship through the use of pro-communist leaders and the permanent placement of Red Army troops on their soil. Eastern Europe became a zone of contention between the two superpowers, shaping Soviet foreign policy orientation in the early years of the Cold War.

In the Cold War bipolar context, creation of the 1955 Warsaw Pact served as the Soviet RSC at a regional level while the Soviet Union and the United States competed

²⁰ Ikenberry, G. John. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 27.

²¹ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 28.

²² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 163.

across RSCs. Stalinist Soviet foreign policy orientation within its own RSC was devised to achieve three goals. First, Stalin sought to maintain the status quo through the use of despotism and brute force to maintain internal security and allegiance from the Soviet Eastern European satellites. Next, Stalin appeared to foster an outward appearance of multilateral action while demanding subservience. His creation of the COMINFORM appeared to unite nine European Communist parties, most of whom led within the Eastern European bloc. Rather than fostering cooperation, this body established a precedent for tighter Eastern European military ties vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact in response to the 1949 formation of NATO. Even though members of the pact professed collective actions, Stalin actually imposed unilateral decisions across the RSC to silence potential opposition through threats or actual use of military retribution or political decapitation.²³

Finally, Stalin remained proactive within the RSC – with limits. Eastern Europe served two functions for the Soviet Union. First and foremost, it was a preventative barrier designed to impede another invasion from a European great power. Secondly, it was a zone of contention between the Soviet Union and United States, serving as a potential tripwire for future conflict between the two countries. Neither Stalin nor the West were prepared politically, militarily, or materially for another repeat of WWII. Stalin's goal was to balance against Europe and the United States without antagonizing them into a military response. Maintaining this balance after the Soviets tested their first atomic weapon in 1949 became even more important based on the risk of nuclear war should any conflict between the two superpowers escalate beyond control. When Stalin ordered the Berlin Blockade in 1948, he was interested in ejecting the Western powers but not to the extent of risking war. As Roger G. Miller points out, Stalin remained unwilling to risk an escalatory war over the Berlin question and demonstrated his intent “to halt Soviet expansionism in the face of Western resolve.”²⁴

The Warsaw Pact and NATO as the RSC Status Quo

When Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet Union's foreign policy maintained Stalinist inertia initiated by continuing to balance against the United States and Europe. Yet

²³ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. “The Warsaw Treaty Organization,” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/warsaw-treaty>

²⁴ Miller, Roger G. *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 14.

beginning with Krushchev, Soviet leaders generally adopted a divergent course from Stalin's apparent brinkmanship with the West. Krushchev's initial conciliation with the United States initially calmed the fraught bipolar relationship by adding more predictability, and thus stability, to the international system. Yet, Krushchev was unwilling to cede any control over East or Central Europe. Instead, the Soviets attempted to reform the system from within through the introduction of industrialization and socialization reforms. Shortly after Stalin's death, reforms were failing as civilian protests occurred in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia but were successfully routed without direct Soviet military intervention. The early Soviet aversion to military force for maintenance of order and stability in Eastern Europe was short-lived.

The 1953 East German uprisings set a precedent for the use of force within the Soviet RSC. After East Berlin protests spread to a general uprising across the rest of the GDR in June 1953, the Politburo, still in turmoil after Stalin's death, ordered the use of the Soviet Red Army to pacify the country. Once Krushchev was firmly in control of the Soviet government by February 1956, he attempted to temper the use of force in Eastern Europe through coercive diplomacy aimed at proxy leaders. In the fall of 1956, diplomacy, backed by the threatened use of force, worked in Poland but backfired as unrest grew uncontrollable in Budapest, Hungary. At first the Soviet Red Army was forced to withdraw. Yet, in order to send a forceful message to the rest of the Warsaw Pact communist leadership, Krushchev viewed a military response as imperative for preserving "the Socialist camp" writ large.²⁵ Crucially, in an October 1956 speech, US Secretary of State Dulles provided assurance to the Soviet Union that the US did not consider the Eastern European countries as allies, tacitly acknowledging the Soviet right to act within the region.

Another internal power struggle occurred within the Soviet Politburo in 1963 as Brezhnev successfully ousted Krushchev from power brought about, in part, through the latter's nuclear brinksmanship with the United States in the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Nearly simultaneously, in Czechoslovakia, the government began to experience unrest in response to persistent food shortages and general recession. Brezhnev's

²⁵ Talbott, Strobe, ed. *Krushchev Remembers*. Translated by Talbott, Strobe. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 429.

personal involvement included recommending the introduction of Czech internal reform measures. After failing, he replaced the Slovak Communist Party Secretary with the reform-minded Alexander Dubcek. Rather than maintaining Brezhnev's prescriptions for reform, Dubcek introduced heretofore unknown freedoms into political and cultural life. These new freedoms allowed incubation and proliferation of public criticism revolving around other failed economic reforms, eventually sparking episodic unrest nationwide. In contrast to the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, other Warsaw Pact leaders grew nervous by events in Czechoslovakia, fearing the demise of their own governments. Following protests during the Prague Spring of 1968, Brezhnev ensnared compliant leaders of Hungary, East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria into a Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. The invasion represented the manifestation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, justifying military force to preserve Warsaw Pact unity. This doctrine remained in place during the 1970s as a Soviet deterrent against any further civil unrest in Eastern Europe. Even though the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan represented the only use of the doctrine to invade a country beyond Eastern Europe, it successfully allowed the Soviet Union to remain in control of its sphere of influence until the next Soviet leadership crisis occurred in the mid-1980s.

From Stalin through Brezhnev, Russia's foreign policy orientation with regards to the Soviet RSC remained stagnant. Krushchev and Brezhnev desired maintenance of the status quo situation. The imposition of pro-Soviet governments with the constant use of secret police, economic sanctions, and the threat of military force persisted as the *modus operandi*. The possibility of nuclear war between the superpowers factored into both countries' calculations throughout this period of Soviet history, alternating between crises and periods of détente.

As the other European great powers ceded their empires based on increased financial burden and social impracticality, decolonization from the 1960s to the 1980s created new RSCs. The Middle Eastern, South Asian and East Asian RSCs all abutted the Soviet RSC and created new zones of contention between the two superpowers. Rather than direct conflict, the United States pursued a strategy of containment, which translated to proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam. From a Soviet perspective, its actions within Eastern Europe continued to maintain the veneer of multilateralism but remained

unilateral and proactive. The Soviet Union consistently maintained a hegemonic security order within its RSC, often reliant on strength-based strategies to influence policies.

Continued maintenance of the order within the RSC served as a means of preserving broader national security interests against the Russian perception of US and Western European encroachment.

Gorbachev – The Soviet RSC Crumbles as the European RSC Expands

As early as 1981, the Soviet Union began to retract the Brezhnev Doctrine as an automatic means of responding to destabilizing events in Eastern Europe. The increasingly entrenched nature of the war in Afghanistan siphoned resources from the Soviet Union as the *Solidarity* movement gained mass appeal in Poland early in the decade. Rather than risk antagonizing the new US President Ronald Reagan, the Soviet response was less direct than the previous East German, Hungarian, and Czechoslovakian interventions. The Soviet-inspired Polish imposition of martial law calmed unrest while the threat of Soviet military force remained marginal.

Brezhnev's death in November 1982 triggered another period of crisis in the Politburo until Gorbachev became CPSU Secretary in March 1985. While he attempted to reform the system from within vis-à-vis his *novoe myshlenie* (new ideas) initiatives and electoral reforms, for the most part he remained committed to inherited centralized economic planning mechanisms. As domestic reforms continued from 1986 to 1989, Gorbachev's foreign policy in the Near Abroad remained stagnant as he increasingly focused on rapprochement with the West and the United States. As a result, the Soviet RSC began to crumble from within. Communist leaders appealed to Gorbachev for assistance to little or no avail. Rather than continuing to underwrite Eastern European leaders through economic aid and military presence, Gorbachev retracted long-standing energy subsidies and reduced Soviet force posture. As NATO remained strong, this gradually created an imbalance of power between the European and Soviet RSCs. In his famous UN speech of 1988, Gorbachev unveiled plans to withdraw Soviet military forces while advocating the right of Eastern European citizens to guide their own destinies.

When the wall came down in Berlin in 1989, dissolution of the Soviet Union became inevitable only with hindsight. Beginning with elections in Poland in June 1989, the communist parties across Eastern Europe steadily lost power and influence over

domestic events as Gorbachev vehemently resisted Soviet intervention. Like dominoes, Stalin-era Eastern European communist governments fell to popular uprisings, increasing the momentum for change within the Soviet government itself. During the Malta Summit with President Bush, Gorbachev reaffirmed his intention to pilot the Soviet Union on a more cooperative course with the United States.

As the Near Abroad deorbited from the Soviet sphere, Gorbachev's domestic reforms fueled formation of two broad political opposition groups. Yeltsin led the first group, advocating for intensified liberalization of the economy and political processes while the other advocated a revisionist, pro-communist past based partially on resurgent Russian nationalism. With remarkable speed, Yeltsin deftly maneuvered into the Presidency, successfully defaming both Gorbachev and the Communist Party as he played the reformist. His formation of a "Slavic Trinity" between the Russian Federation, Belarus, and the newly independent Ukraine resulted in the Tripartite Slavic Summit on 7 December 1991. During the summit, Yeltsin negotiated the final end of the USSR with the new Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and the Speaker of the Belarusian parliament, Stanislau Shuskevich, effectively undermining Gorbachev's authority. The Slavic Trinity agreement to create the CIS effectively disbanded the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.²⁶ The independent actions of Ukraine and Belarus on the periphery effectively dismantled Soviet authority from the Kremlin.

During Gorbachev's tumultuous tenure as the last CPSU Party Secretary, his foreign policy orientation in the weakening Soviet RSC aimed at preserving the USSR in its pre-1989 configuration. But across Eastern Europe, dissatisfaction with this status quo resulted in the union's disintegration between 1989 and 1991. The regional hegemony Stalin and his successors established within the Central Eurasian RSC disappeared virtually overnight. Yet, the Russian Federation still maintained overwhelming power and influence regionally as the largest, most populous, and most capable military-industrial complex.²⁷ The loss of imperial control over these regions combined with rapid, internal political confusion regarding Russia's new orientation precipitated a

²⁶ Plokhy, Serhii. *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014), 303-316.

²⁷ Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 81.

decade of social, political, and economic degradation. This was Yeltsin's decade.²⁸ The stagnant nature of Gorbachev's foreign policy in the near abroad telegraphed the economic, military, and diplomatic weakness of the USSR in its last days. His focus on reformation of the state from within allowed the Soviet satellites to chart their own courses, mostly free from the fear of any Soviet violent reaction.

The Yeltsin-Putin Era – Regional Powers and Security Framework

During the early 1990s, Europe's RSC was transformed by Soviet dissolution. During the early Yeltsin-Kozyrev years, Russia pursued a western-focused, integrationist approach to Europe and the United States while paying little attention to former Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe. As a result, an initial OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) complex began to form, which included Russia.²⁹ After 1993-1994, Russian domestic civil and political backlash intensified against Yeltsin's efforts at further market reform, as living conditions worsened. In an attempt to diminish the threats to his personal power, Yeltsin steadily shifted the state's foreign policy course. From early 1994, policy and military doctrine included more references to countries in the Near Abroad as targets of economic, military, and civilizational integration. The Russian Federation's status as the preeminent power within the post-Soviet space made it the default power center within the Eurasian RSC.³⁰

The RPSF builds on the RSC Theory as the basis for describing Russian leadership, custodianship, and protection roles within the Central European RSC to explain the transitional nature of Russia's foreign policy. In addition, three axes describe the manner by which Russia's foreign policy orientation developed within the RSC: revisionist vs. status quo; unilateral vs. multilateral actions; and proactive vs. reactive actions. Since the end of the Cold War, these descriptions and orientations of Russia's foreign policy are informed by facets of realism and constructivism. From a realist perspective, Yeltsin and Putin both adopted policies aimed at balancing against perceptions of unjustified and unwarranted US, EU, and Chinese material influence in the Near Abroad. From a constructivist perspective, the unique Russian identification of sovereign democracy was implicitly linked with the idea of *derzhavnichestvo* (state

²⁸ Stewart-Ingwersen & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 32.

²⁹ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 343.

³⁰ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 343.

strength) which included idealized aspirations for reinstatement of global power status coupled with expansionism into and control of the Near Abroad.³¹ Internally, *gossudarstvenichestvo* (government strength) encapsulated the state's need to maintain internal order via government security apparatuses. Once Putin assumed the presidency in 2000, the external Statist conception gained additional traction as Putin frequently defended Russia's inherent right to act independently regardless of international institutional restrictions.³² The West and the United States continued to embody Russia's significant other. Putin justified foreign policy decisions and actions with regards to the Near Abroad based on an enduring conception of Russian identity founded on preserving internal order while repelling external threats.³³

Within the RPSF, Russia's identity is linked to how well it executes leadership, custodianship, and protectorship within the Central Eurasian RSC. To more precisely evaluate these roles, the RSC must first be bounded and defined. Within the “weak European supercomplex,” two competing RSCs existed – the European RSC dominated by the member nations of the European Union and the Russian RSC led by the Russian Federation as the dominant CIS power. Buzan and Waever identify four subregions within this complex: the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.³⁴ To limit the scope of this RSC, this discussion excludes the five Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. To add more precision, this discussion adopts Bugajski's description of Russian “subzones” within Eastern Europe: The European CIS (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova), the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), Central Europe (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic), and Southeast Europe (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania).³⁵ Only one of the four sub-zones, the European CIS,

³¹ Ziegler, Charles E. “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives.” *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (March 2012): 400–417, 407.

³² Ziegler, “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives,” 410.

³³ Ziegler, “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives,” 410.

³⁴ Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Powers*, 397.

³⁵ Bugajski, Janusz. *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism*. (Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 29-30.

is still linked to the Russian Federation. States in the other three sub-zones chose integration with Western Europe institutionally rather than formal alliance with Russia.

The geographical closeness between the European and Russian RSCs necessitates oscillation between cooperation and competition based on variances in EU-Russia tensions.³⁶ “Normative assumptions” associated with “well-being, solidarity, justice, sovereignty, security and democracy” are viewed differently by the great powers within the RSCs. As a result, divergent ideas regarding constitutive variables of identity, material interests, and different governing styles contribute to misunderstanding based on value differences rooted in divergent cultures and histories.³⁷ Since the end of the Cold War, Russian and EU identities remain malleable and often incongruent.³⁸ The identity preferences of Russia under Yeltsin and Putin have influenced the degree to which its state apparatus has executed leadership, custodianship, and protectorship roles in determining the trajectory of its foreign policy within or adjacent to its RSC. The following sections will utilize the RPSF lexicon to analyze each period of the Soviet Union’s and Russian Federation’s history in an attempt to determine consistencies in roles and their subsequent influence on foreign policy orientations. Russian leaders from Stalin to Putin have always operated in a Kremlin culture defined by personalized and centralized power and control and sensitivity to any potential external destabilizing events or actors.³⁹ Russian and EU differences in identity and political cultures increasingly translate to divergent views on issues related to common yet competing interests on the seam between the European and Russian RSCs.

Yeltsin – The Regional Powers and Security Framework with Russia in Transition

Even though Russia’s relative power and regional credibility were vastly diminished, Yeltsin and others within the powerful Russian elite harbored a sense of Russia’s privileged regional position based on the presence of a 25-million strong Russian diaspora beyond Russia’s borders. Russia’s privileged interests in protecting these ethnic Russians served as an early foreign policy cornerstone influencing

³⁶ DeBardeleben, Joan. “Applying Constructivism to Understanding EU-Russian Relations.” *International Politics* 49, no. 4 (March 30, 2012): 418–33, 427.

³⁷ DeBardeleben, “Applying Constructivism to Understanding EU-Russian Relations,” 427-428.

³⁸ DeBardeleben, “Applying Constructivism to Understanding EU-Russian Relations,” 430.

³⁹ Ziegler, “Conceptualizing Sovereignty in Russian Foreign Policy: Realist and Constructivist Perspectives,” 406.

subsequent policy formation in the RSC. In addition, Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev sought to cultivate an image of post-Soviet Russia as a young democracy.⁴⁰ The continuation of cordial US-Russian relations was vital to these early efforts.

Shortly after negotiating the agreement to create the CIS, Yeltsin welcomed Secretary of State James Baker to Moscow. During Baker's 15 December 1991 visit to the Kremlin, Yeltsin provided strident confirmation of three continuities between Soviet and Russian policies. First, Yeltsin virtually guaranteed Gorbachev's immunity from criminal prosecution for any improprieties regarding the union's demise. Second, Russia assumed leadership of the USSR's previous responsibilities on the UN Security Council as well as internal governmental functions within the Russian Federation. Finally and most importantly, Yeltsin assumed control of the Russian nuclear inventory and promised further control measures.⁴¹ Baker left Moscow convinced of the USSR's demise and impressed with the qualitative early measures Yeltsin initiated. In 1992, Yeltsin attempted to consolidate CIS multilateral security as espoused in the Collective Security Treaty.⁴²

Despite the Yeltsin-Kozyrev team's early multilateralism, the CIS proved dysfunctional based on a lack of institutionalization and growing suspicion by Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Moldova regarding Russian intentions. As Yeltsin dealt with simmering public dissatisfaction and legislative dissent resulting from Gaidar's shock therapy reforms, his Near Abroad foreign policy remained neglected and devoid of vision.⁴³ Early in his tenure, Yeltsin's attentions remained affixed on addressing Russia's domestic situation while improving relations with NATO and the West. After the Khasbulatov-Rutskoi devised White House putsch in October 1993, Yeltsin altered his foreign policy from a westernizing course to one designed to secure domestic approval through an emphasis on Russia's primacy in the Near Abroad. Despite early intimations of peaceful regional cooperation, for the remainder of Yeltsin's tenure, multilateral securitization efforts were diffuse. Even so, they embodied the initial foreign policy

⁴⁰ Thorun, Christian. *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West*. (Hounds mills, Basingstoke, Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 32.

⁴¹ Plokhy, *The Last Empire*, 338-339.

⁴² Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 82.

⁴³ Stewart-Ingersol & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 82.

frameworks Putin adopted after 2000. Initiation of the Shanghai Five with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1996 laid the foundations for the jointly-led but Chinese-dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Beginning with the 1992 Foreign Policy Concept and continuing with the release of a new Military Doctrine in 1993, Yeltsin projected the idea of Russian “privileged interests” in the Near Abroad as a means of providing stability through protection of ethnic Russians. This also served the goal of restoring some vestige of Russia’s regional hegemony. As such, Russia demonstrated an interest in maintaining its custodianship role by attempting to manage conflict and the scourge of terrorism as both erupted in former Soviet states. In Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia attempted to secede from the state almost “immediately upon [Georgian] independence.”⁴⁴ From 1994 to 1997, Yeltsin attempted to mediate other ethnic conflicts in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, Transnistria in Moldova, and in Tajikistan. Containing these conflicts underscored Russia’s primacy in maintaining stability within the RSC.⁴⁵

Yeltsin’s replacement of Kozyrev with Yevgeni Primakov in 1995 propelled Russia’s foreign policy orientation towards restoration of “Russia as Eurasian power.”⁴⁶ To emphasize this point further, Yeltsin released “The Establishment of the Strategic Course of the Russian Federation with Member States of the CIS.” This was followed by the March 1997 release of the “CIS Concept of Economic Development.” With Primakov’s imprints on both documents, they framed the economic and political integration aspirations for the near abroad.⁴⁷ Even though Russia portrayed itself as the leader of a multilateral coalition of states within the CIS, its domination of other members within the coalition and its preference for bilateral agreements belied only the impression of cooperation.⁴⁸ Further demonstrating the bureaucratic ineffectiveness of the CIS, only 130 of 816 CIS parliamentary documents were adopted by all the member states between 1991 and March 1998.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Stewartt-Ingersol & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 107.

⁴⁵ Stewartt-Ingersol & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 107.

⁴⁶ DeBardeleben, “Applying Constructivism to Understanding EU-Russian Relations,” 420.

⁴⁷ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. (Lanham, Maryland: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 177.

⁴⁸ Stewartt-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 190.

⁴⁹ Stewartt-Ingersol and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 192.

Russia's policies were motivated by different considerations across the Caucasus and Central Asian subregions than those in Europe. All along Russia's southern periphery, domestic and transnational terrorism along with illicit narcotics and human trafficking provided ammunition for setting up more robust border security in regions that were, for the most part, more accepting of Russia's presence. On the European seam with NATO, Russia viewed NATO expansion as a direct threat to Russia's regional interests. Yeltsin and Primakov courted close ties with Ukraine and Belarus in an effort to preserve military footholds in these regions. The Crimean peninsula remained especially important as home of the Russian Black Sea fleet. Primakov's "Big Treaty" with Ukraine formalized long-disputed borders between the two countries and allowed long-term use of the Crimean naval base at Sevastopol.⁵⁰ Yet, Russia's "NATO containment policy" was generally weakened by the relative decline of Russia's power and continuing suspicion of its intentions in Europe. Tsygankov characterized Primakov's policy orientation during the latter half of Yeltsin's presidency as a "defensive honor vision" influenced by the West's cursory acceptance of its actions and policies.⁵¹

In the Caucasus, Russia's war in Chechnya remained consistent with its earlier declaratory intention to proactively combat terrorism and conflict within the CIS. Tsygankov and van Herpen both characterize the first Chechen war from 1994-1996 as a diversionary ploy by Yeltsin to bolster his electoral chances in preparation for the 1996 presidential elections. Even though Yeltsin failed to raise Russian living standards, his security policies underscored a propensity to remain proactive with regards to regional security. The Chechen War's duration, bloodshed, and cost demonstrated the proactive nature of Russia's policies, even if misguided and poorly executed.⁵² The first Chechen war served as the first dramatic shift away from the distracted, reactive nature of Gorbachev's foreign policy in the USSR's final days.

Putin – The Regional Powers and Security Framework

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 resulted in rapid deflation of the Russian economy in 1998 and contributed to Yeltsin's reactionary leadership as he fired and

⁵⁰ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 177-178.

⁵¹ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 179-180.

⁵² Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 183.

replaced senior ministers and disbanded the government outright twice. Public disillusionment with the promise of Russia's re-emergence as a global power combined with corruption that enriched Yeltsin's inner circle and the select oligarchic elite demonstrated the Russian state's political and economic deterioration.⁵³ Russia's perception of NATO's unilateral actions in prosecuting the air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia drew an immediate rebuttal from now-Prime Minister Primakov as he withdrew from IMF and NATO cooperative efforts. While Primakov's actions were widely accepted by the majority of Russians, Yeltsin increasingly viewed him as a threat and relieved him of his post along with the rest of his government. From May to December 1999, Yeltsin's erratic leadership style threw the government into turmoil until his decision to relinquish power to Vladimir Putin, a virtual unknown beyond Russian policy and business elites.

After Putin's election to the presidency in 2000, Russia's resistance to multilateral cooperation threatening its independent freedom of action characterized the strength-based nature of the regional security order within the Central Eurasian RSC.⁵⁴ The second Chechen war from 2000-2009, the "Color Revolutions" of 2003-2005 coinciding with the second round of NATO expansion efforts in 2004, and the 2008 war against Georgia together identify the roles Putin adopted in pursuit of his foreign policy orientation.

After 2000, Putin demonstrated a more decisive, even if combative, personal leadership style than Yeltsin had during the second half of the 1990s. His leadership style continued Yeltsin's tradition of managing major government policy decisions through the use of a small, tightly-controlled group of advisors. Putin fashioned a regime defined as "a series of concentric circles." At the center, Putin developed control mechanisms over the oligarchs managing production and distribution wealth generated by vast natural gas and oil resources. His power over them remained ensconced in his ability to protect their assets from state appropriation and competition by others.⁵⁵ Beyond the oligarchs, Putin managed the Kremlin through a small, elite group of trusted

⁵³ Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 32.

⁵⁴ Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 33.

⁵⁵ Hill, Fiona, and Clifford G. Gaddy. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 211.

advisors. Beyond these two groups and the government functionaries who carry out Putin’s bidding, the Russian population have no voice in government decisions and actions.⁵⁶

To more tightly control foreign policy in the near abroad, Putin strengthened the Yeltsin’s multilateral framework. To simultaneously manage the inevitability of Chinese involvement in its RSC, Putin followed China’s lead in formalizing 1996’s Shanghai Five into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. In addition, the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was broadened in 2002 to replace the original CSO security framework and foster closer political and military ties across its southern periphery. Together, the SCO and CSTO form the nucleus of Russia’s regional efforts to combat terrorism. Economically, Russia led efforts to create the Eurasian Economic Community in 2001 to tighten bonds within the CIS. Through these organizations, the Kremlin has “increased the extensiveness and effectiveness of its regional leadership.”⁵⁷

From a custodianship perspective, Putin has sought to re-assert its regional influence within the RSC with Russia as the dominant state. Russia has sought to extinguish what it perceives as a threat to the existing security order as demonstrated by two costly war. The 2000-2009 war in Chechnya and the 2008 Georgia war illustrate the Russian proclivity to act within its RSC unilaterally to maintain its position even at the risk of international condemnation. The short war against Georgia sent a strong message to other states across the region that Russia would use force to achieve national interests and foment perceptions of NATO expansion into its RSC. Consistent Russian political and military support for the two Georgian secessionist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are indicative of Russia’s continued use of the Russian diaspora as an excuse for interfering in the relations of its neighbors. The military seizure of Crimea and Russian military presence in Ukraine since early 2014 are but the latest, manifestations of Russia’s use of force to maintain its position as the dominant regional power. As Mearsheimer postulates, a great power will attempt to maximize its regional power to maintain regional hegemony.⁵⁸ The methods Russia uses to execute

⁵⁶ Hill and Gaddy. *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, 211.

⁵⁷ Stewartt-Ingersoll & Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 84

⁵⁸ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. 2nd ed. (New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014), 138.

custodianship within its region demonstrate its intention not to cede any more territory to NATO expansion. Georgia and Ukraine are both central to Russia's national identity even as both countries gradually devolve towards the EU and NATO. Rather than strengthening Russia's international position and proclamations of abiding by international law, its military exploits have instead tarnished its identity in the West.

During the 1990s, Yeltsin initially ignored the Near Abroad before attempting to restore relations in order to re-establish regional dominance as a stepping stone to reasserting global power. Yeltsin succeeded only marginally as he maintained personal power through constitutional limitations on personal and legislative power. Putin's rise on the heels of the 1998 financial crisis converged with the security imperatives created by the Russian necessity to intervene in Chechnya again in 1999. As oil prices rose dramatically and Russia's economy recovered, Putin popularity in Russian civil society continued after his election in 2000 based on his promises to rebuild a strong Russian state and its attendant great power status.

Implementation of the Putin Doctrine builds on the policies Yeltsin and Primakov initiated during the later 1990s. The revisionist nature of this doctrine espouses restoration of Russian power in the Near Abroad as a means of re-asserting its great power status further afield. Domestically, Putin has succeeded in harnessing the oil and natural gas extraction and exportation industries to the state for purposes of enriching state coffers. As an added benefit, these resources have fueled the gradual rise in Russian GDP. The fight against terrorism and control of wealthy oligarchs like Khodorkovsky served as Putin's impetus for implementing state control over civil society. Putin personally manages the Russian judiciary and electoral process and manages Russian mainstream media through his elite policy team in the Kremlin to control virtually all the news Russians receive.⁵⁹ The Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine combined with the fifth and largest round of NATO expansion into former Soviet spaces were particularly shocking to the Putin regime. Viewing the Color Revolutions as western and US-inspired, Putin implemented more restrictions in the lead up the 2007 and 2008

⁵⁹ Aron, Leon. "The Putin Doctrine: Russia's Quest to Rebuild the Soviet State," (8 March 2013), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2013-03-08/putin-doctrine>

parliamentary and presidential elections, essentially nullifying any potential for an opposition upset.

Externally, Russia's foreign policy under Putin has consistently included reintegration of the Near Abroad a central aspiration. Putin's release of Russia's Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) in 2013 maintained the basic tenets of his 2000 FPC articulated in five sections emphasizing the country's regional and global aspirations. Throughout this period, Russia portrayed multilateral and international organizations from the United Nations to the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) as the critical forums for maintaining global and regional stability. NATO expansion is still viewed a threat based on infrastructure placement in close proximity to Russia's borders.⁶⁰ The Council of Europe and the OSCE are acknowledged as viable regional institutions but their marginal role in the FPC indicates Russia's view of these institutions as only marginally important. In sum, Russia's view of all of these organizations has remained consistent since Putin's first electoral victory in 2000.

In contrast to earlier foreign policy documents, the 2013 FPC outlines the inherent right of Russia to utilize hard and soft power instruments to promulgate and strengthen Russian civil society, culture, and language internally and in its Near Abroad.

Monaghan's comparison of the 2000 FPC with the 2013 FPC offers a fitting analysis of Russia's brand of soft power as soft strength aimed at preserving Russian security. The linkage between soft power and regional security is offered as the central tenet of disagreements between the West and Russia over methods for achieving and preserving regional and global stability.⁶¹

While the West views soft power as method of peacefully coopting other nations, Russia's use of soft power is conceived as a "comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives."⁶² The FPC denounces the use of soft power for nefarious purposes but, in practice, uses soft power tools to strengthen Russia's regional position through cultural, political, and economic interference in the affairs of its European neighbors.

⁶⁰ Putin, V. "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation." 12 February 2013. http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

⁶¹ Monaghan, Andrew. "The New Russian Foreign Policy Concept: Evolving Continuity"

⁶² Putin, v. para. 20.

Control of energy exports from Russia through the CIS states to Europe serves as a primary tool for creating Russian wealth while simultaneously serving as binding agent with Central and Eastern European neighbors.⁶³ In addition, Russia attempts to influence extant pockets of the Russian diaspora on its European periphery through the use of mass media promulgating Russian language and culture. Russia views its combined instruments of soft power as a means of spreading influence. With the exception of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia, these efforts have not resulted in any major attempts by former Soviet states to reunify with Russia.⁶⁴

To complement its soft power, Putin increasingly emphasizes the strength and reach of the Russian military. Russian military spending since Putin became President in 2000 has increased in each year as depicted in Figure 6.1. Russia's goals in its Near Abroad are to gain "unchallenged military superiority" through military expenditures which have increased "from an estimated \$29 billion in 2000 to \$64 billion in 2011."⁶⁵ These increases continue despite stagnant and declining Western European defense expenditures (Figure 6.2).

Russia's latest Military Doctrine released in December 2014 identifies NATO as the primary threat actor. While this language is not new, the doctrine combined with its continuing actions in Ukraine indicate Moscow's emphasis on strengthening military instruments as a means of projecting regional and global influence. The new doctrine is novel in its inclusion of "information warfare and political subversion" as potential risks to regional and internal stability. When combined with Putin's introduction of legal and political restrictions, the military doctrine adds emphasis to Putin's desire to maintain internal stability and Russian regional influence.

⁶³ Trenin, Dmitri. "Russia's Spheres of Interest Not Influence." *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 2009): 3–22, 15-16.

⁶⁴ Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest Not Influence," 18.

⁶⁵ Aron, "The Putin Doctrine"

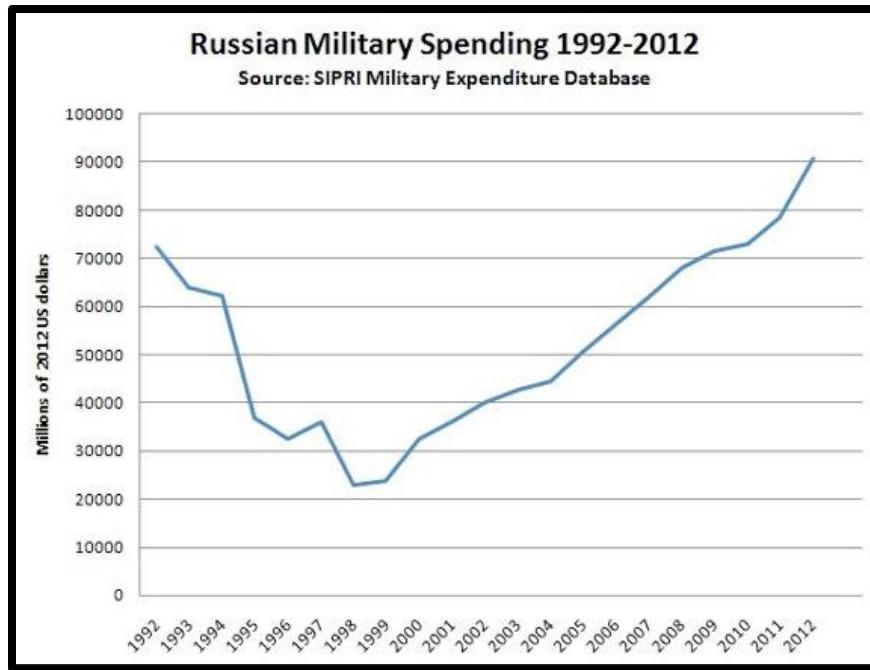


Figure 11: Russian Military Spending Increases

Source: Adapted From: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database,
http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

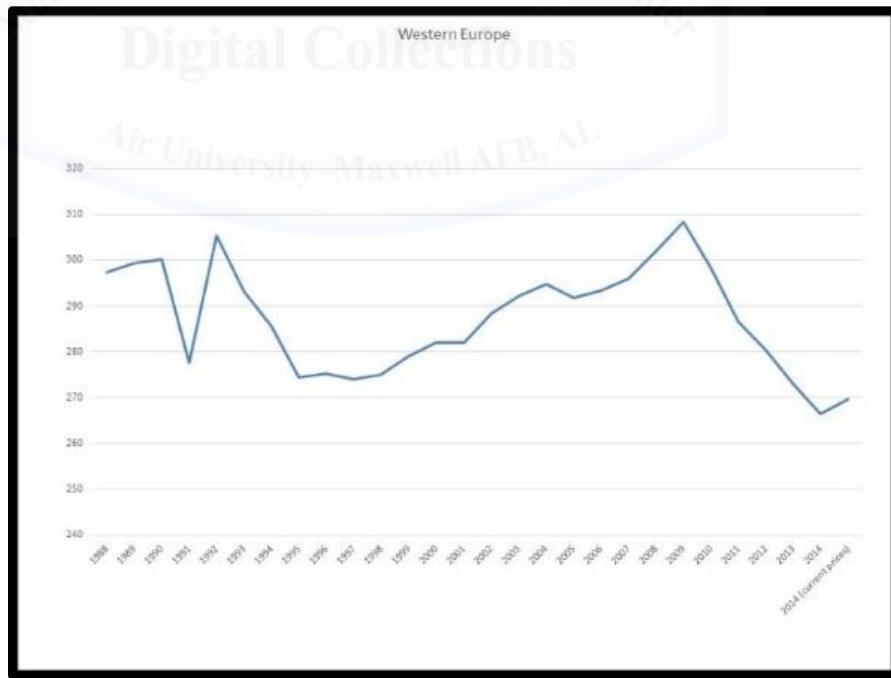


Figure 12: Western European Defense Expenditure (in USD billions)

Source: Adapted From: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database,
http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

To punctuate the consistency of President Putin's strength-based approach to defense, his February 2015 speech commemorating the end of the Great Patriotic War (WWII) bluntly professed Russia's military superiority against any strong adversary. The use of Russian military force in eastern Ukraine, together with the 2008 invasion of Georgia, clearly demonstrates Putin's proclivity to act aggressively over questions of its role within the Near Abroad. Even as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, continues to deny direct military involvement in Ukraine, numerous bodies of evidence indicate the exact opposite based on ubiquitous media reporting as depicted in Figure 6.3.

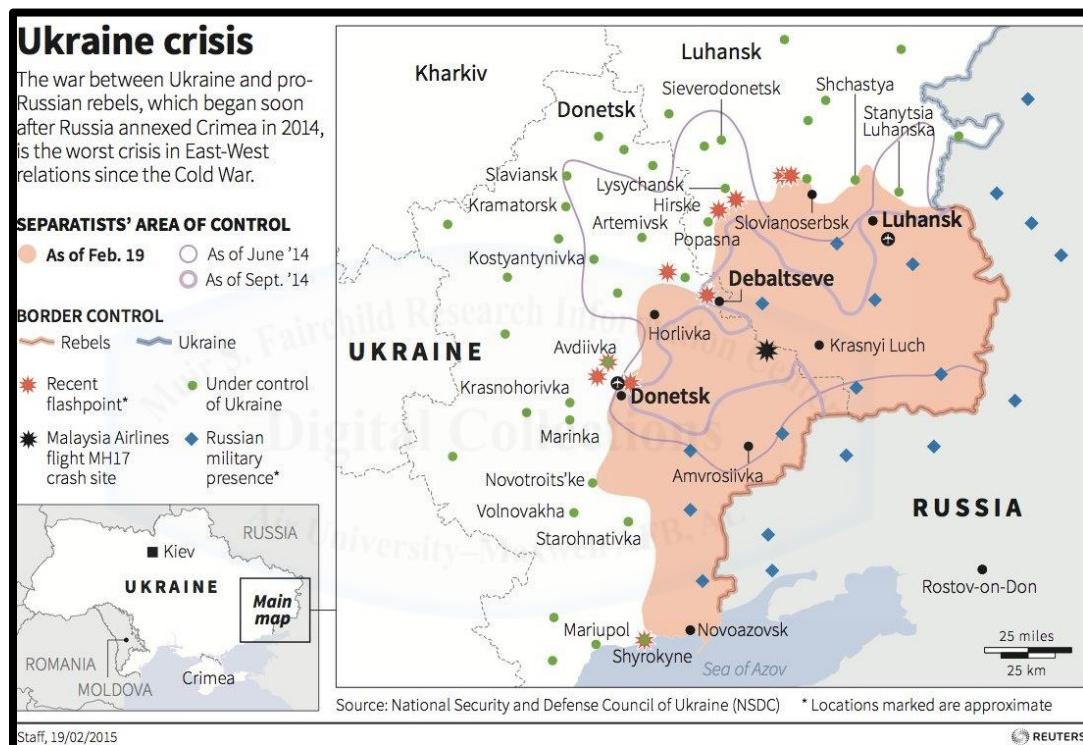


Figure 6.3: Russian Military Presence in Eastern Ukraine

Source: Reprinted from: Reuters, <http://www.businessinsider.com/putin-russias-military-strength-is-unmatchable-2015-2>

As the 2008 Georgia War and ongoing crisis in Ukraine demonstrate, Russia remains particularly sensitive to any attempts by NATO and the West to restrain Russian actions or penetrate further into FSU spaces. The protection of the Russian diaspora in these countries and other regions on Russia's periphery serve as the vehicle for justifying Russian actions in its Near Abroad. Given these trends, it is quite likely that Russia will

continue to conduct itself as a strength-based regional power in an attempt to revise the current status quo to one in which Russian hegemony is central.⁶⁶

The wars in Georgia and the invasion of Crimea coupled with continued military actions in eastern Ukraine are both indicative of the Putin's unilateral foreign policy orientation. Russia's creation of the CSTO, the Eurasian Economic Union, and its shared leadership role with China in the SCO reflect a Russian desire to balance against NATO and the European Union rather than multilateral regional cooperation. In order to define these institutions as multilateral, they must be considered based on three elements: inseparability, mutual adherence to legal norms, and state-to-state reciprocity.⁶⁷

Rather than serving as a forum for combating regional problems such as illicit drug trafficking and toxic extremism, the CSTO actually provides Russia with a legal basis for stationing Russian military forces beyond the Russian Federation in an attempt to counter Western military influence and basing in the region.⁶⁸ From a regional perspective, the provisions of the CSTO charter provide a unified notion of mutual security concerns while Russia uses the organization as a way to balance against western regional penetration. Yet, persistent mistrust of long-term Russian objectives across the region have essentially weakened the organization's original mandate, particularly after the 2008 Georgia war and recent Russian exploits in Ukraine.⁶⁹

While the SCO operates based on shared policy objectives, the institution allows Russia to counter Chinese regional incursions through the use of Russian-backed Central Asian authoritarian regimes which serve the dual purpose of preventing western influence from Russia's southern axis. While the organization operates using shared legal norms with security and economic issues as central foci, the Central Asian states utilize the institution to play China and Russia against each other. After the 2008-2009 financial crisis, Russia relied on Chinese capital injections in the hydrocarbon sector, empowering the secondary states in selecting which great power to follow or allow access to the

⁶⁶ Stewart-Ingwersoll, Robert, and Derrick Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework*. (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), 169.

⁶⁷ Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 191.

⁶⁸ Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 193-194.

⁶⁹ Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 194.

sector.⁷⁰ As result, Russia is wary of China's infiltration into its southern regions but uses the SCO to help justify support for pro-Russian authoritarian-led governments.⁷¹ Based on the weakness of these two key multilateral organizations, Russia generally reserves for itself the right to act unilaterally despite its participation in a supposedly sticky institutional web.

Finally, Moscow's revisionist desire to restore regional hegemony through unilateral use of national instruments of power indicate a proactive foreign policy orientation. Putin's central management of internal domestic policy and control of external mechanisms for exerting Russian influence close to its sensitive periphery portend a similar future. Putin continues to perceive NATO as an intrusive threat to the CIS, despite continued NATO and US reassurances to the contrary. His strategic framework for the future includes continued maintenance of domestic security controls and calculated responses to western probes into the Near Abroad vis-à-vis NATO designed to prevent certain escalation. This proactivity is defined by retraction from the post-WWII and post-Soviet international system while consolidating Putin's variation on personalized power extant since Stalin's reign. This retraction from institutions and agreements established during the Cold War are devised to restore Russian primacy and credibility within the Eurasian RSC.⁷² But, Russia's proactive inclinations in the Near Abroad have actually had the opposite effect. Rather than fostering multilateral and mutually beneficial institutional behavior, Putin has often opted to utilize energy as a coercive instrument. Most compelling, Russia's proactive utilization of military force in Georgia and Ukraine have undermined the perennially weak regional institution structure by instilling fear and mistrust in neighbors who might be more cooperative, absent coercion and force.⁷³

Implications

Putin's actions indicate his intention to continue propelling Russia's foreign policy in an aggressive direction designed to compel compliance from states in the Near Abroad. The Kremlin aspires to regain Russia's lost global power status through the

⁷⁰ Sussex, Matthew. "The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR," in Sussex, Matthew, ed. *Conflict in the Former Soviet Union*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56.

⁷¹ Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 195.

⁷² Stewart-Ingwersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 208.

⁷³ Sussex, "The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR," 63.

creation of institutions which have multinational visages. Yet, these institutions remain weak based on the lack of reciprocity, shared rules and behaviors, and cooperation founded on a perennial mistrust of Russia's intentions. Russia thus risks isolating itself from the very institutions it seeks to have a role in through actions incommensurate with international legal norms and accepted state behavior. The EU, the United States, and China all serve as competitors for the attention of the independent states located in Russia's Near Abroad. Most of the states in Central and Eastern Europe have opted to join the European security order as a hedge against future Russia interference in their sovereign affairs. This serves as testimony to their fear of eventual Russian resurgence which may include their subjugation through instruments of economic, political, diplomatic, or military power. This is unlikely to change as long as Russia's official rhetoric and actions indicate an intention to subjugate states in the Near Abroad rather than cooperate.

Russia's foreign policy with regards to its Near Abroad and the wider international community continues to remain on an uncertain trajectory. Putin's nationalistic language and overt showcasing of Russian military capabilities highlight an aggressive and potentially destabilizing influence in the Near Abroad. Yet, despite these actions, Russia is neither inclined to directly confront the West militarily nor cause further damage to its international credibility. But, Russia will continue to resist further infringement into former Soviet spaces to which it believes it has a privileged interest. The 2008 Georgia War and the seizure of Crimea in the Ukraine in 2014 both demonstrate Moscow's belief that these two countries should remain within the Kremlin's span of control. Both countries cater to the EU, the OSCE, and the United States as a means of preventing further Russian interference in their sovereign affairs. For Putin, these countries are the crown jewels in a proactive plan to restore at least some vestige of the Russian and Soviet empires through a soft power mechanism aimed at fomenting the Russian diaspora into rebelling. Russia's use of soft power remains an insidious means to insight internal dissent in the Near Abroad, providing Russia with a continuing justification to protect ethnic Russians in these countries. In eastern Ukraine and Crimea, this has proven an achievable goal based on the large Russian-speaking and culturally attuned populations there. While Russia is likely to continue using military

force and economic coercion in specific instances, it is unlikely Russia will execute a massive military invasion to subjugate these two nations by force. Within the international system and as an aspiring superpower, Russia's great power identity is tethered to its relations with other regional and global powers.

The West would prefer to deal with Russia as a cooperative partner. As an example, NATO and Russia have a relatively positive history of joint endeavors. The 1997 NATO-Russian Founding Act initiated the progressive creation of formal mechanisms for enhancing cooperative efforts in an attempt to reduce friction and fog. Despite repeated assurances that NATO poses no threat to Russia's territorial integrity or vital national interests, Russia's actions are driven primarily by Putin's vision of rebuilding its sphere of interests in the Near Abroad. Putin will continue to tout the protection of Russian citizens in neighboring Central and Eastern European states as justification for continued engagement in these countries. The Baltic States still contain large Russian-speaking minorities susceptible to Russian soft power tactics such as Russian-controlled media manipulation.

Is Russia seeking to build a new empire or restore an old one? Russia continues to seek a dominant role in the regional organizations it helped found as a means of preserving and strengthening its role. The CSTO and the SCO fulfil regional security and economic interests for the Russian state. Yet, these organizations remain weakened by suspicion over Russian intentions and internal competition between China and Russia. While Russia desires to strengthen these organizations, it is unlikely they can serve in a global leadership capacity as long as divergent goals and limited cooperation remain key features. Even though Russia may desire expansion leading to the recreation of its former regional hegemony across Eastern and Central Europe, the Kremlin will remain constrained in its ability to do so by resistance from NATO, the EU, and the United States. Additionally, most of the Central and Eastern European states previously orbiting within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence have opted for independence and integration with Western Europe rather than alliance with the Russian Federation.

The most likely danger for the West is Putin's unpredictability based on his driving motivation to retain his brand of personalized power within Russia. As all Soviet and Russian leaders before him have done, save Gorbachev, Putin has surrounded himself

with supportive power elites who are likely to give him the advice he wants to hear or parrot his policies without opposition. As his constitutional powers expand at the expense of other potential political and legal opponents, this internal status quo is unlikely to change. Based on continued restrictions on the media, personal freedom, legal opposition, and prohibitions on foreign travel, it seems clear that Russia is moving towards a unique brand of despotism.



Chapter 7

Conclusion

Nationalism, separatism and a desire for self-determination have all played a role in exacerbating the local, transnational and interstate security challenges that exist in the former Soviet space. So too have weak governance structures, the economic paralysis of the 1990s, radical Islam and polarised identities, along with the resurgence of the great power image after Vladimir Putin took over from Boris Yeltsin, which coincided with the sudden strengthening of the Russian economy.

- Matthew Sussex, “Conclusions: The Future of Conflict in the Former USSR”

This thesis has provided historical case studies of four periods of Russian history spanning from Stalin’s rule of the USSR immediately after the conclusion of World War II through President Vladimir Putin’s first presidential term. In each of these periods, Soviet and Russian actions in the European Near Abroad have been devised to maintain or bolster internal Russian domestic stability to preserve national honor and prestige. Additionally, though not exclusively, Russia has consistently demonstrated a proclivity to subordinate the interests of its former Soviet neighbor states to its own despite participation in presumably multilateral and international organizations.

In an effort to highlight consistencies across these four historical periods, the case studies examined periods of crisis within each historical case study as critical episodes contributing to Russia’s foreign policy in its Near Abroad. Based on these crises internal to its regional security complex and its relations with Western Europe and the United States, Russia adopted foreign policy roles and orientations after the demise of the Soviet Union which bolstered its regional hegemony or attempted to restore its great power status.

Three broad themes emerge with regards to Russian foreign policy in the Near Abroad. During the Cold War, foreign policy in the Near Abroad remained stagnant after Stalin’s successors satisfactorily resolved the enduring status of Eastern and Central Europe through creation of the Warsaw Pact. After Stalin’s death, formalization of Soviet control over Eastern and Central Europe through the pact preserved a status quo which remained in effect through the end of the regime of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982. Following three years of leadership crisis within the Kremlin after Brezhnev’s death,

Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to the position of General Secretary of the CPSU, the last one of the Soviet Union. Without intending to, his introduction of internal reforms and insistence on staying out of internal affairs in Eastern and Central Europe led to destabilization of the status quo extant within the regional security order. A second broad theme of transition away from the status quo emerged in Soviet and Russian foreign policy with the Near Abroad. This period of transition endured through President Boris Yeltsin's tenure as the Russian Federation's first President. With the rise of President Putin, a third broad theme emerged, emphasizing strength-based, unilateral policies in the Near Abroad with the goal of revising the status quo in an effort to enhance Russia's status from a great power to a regional hegemon.

Russian Foreign Policy Stagnation

First, for the duration of the Cold War from Stalin through Brezhnev's death in 1982, the Soviet Union's foreign policy orientation remained predominantly static and therefore predictable. Stalin's steady re-establishment of control over Central and Eastern Europe and the creation of the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact was designed to maintain the status quo across the Eurasian Regional Security Complex. As a hegemonic power with the RSC, Russia exercised overt political, military, and economic control the other nation states within the Soviet sphere. Even though the Warsaw Pact was portrayed a multilateral alliance, it served as a means for preserving regional order and stability based on Soviet national interests first through the use of localized national surrogate governments.

Subordinating the interests of Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War manifested itself through the placement of Communist Party functionaries who took their marching orders from the Kremlin. When civil uprisings occurred periodically, the Soviet Union used force to restore the status quo within the alliance. The uprisings in East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956 triggered Soviet military responses to restore civil order through pro-Soviet vassals, policies, and societies. The Brezhnev Doctrine manifested itself through the combined Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 based on Eastern European and Soviet fear that the unrest would cascade to other nations within the alliance.

Beyond Europe, Stalin and his Soviet successors sought to maintain global power parity with its primary other, the United States and Western Europe. While structural realism helps partially explain Soviet balancing against the post-war, US-dominated institutional system, constructivism provides additional clarity for Russia's identity as a function of its ability to maintain honor and prestige in its relations with the West. The Soviet Union and Russia have frequently acted unilaterally within the RSC, but have remained sensitive to potential European and US reactions. The Berlin Crises of the late 1940s demonstrated that Stalin intended to balance against Europe and the United States across Eastern Europe but not to the extent of risking conventional or nuclear war between the two blocks. Even though the United States was well aware of Soviet actions in Poland and Hungary in 1953, the Eisenhower administration made it clear to Krushchev that it would not intercede against Soviet actions within Central and Eastern Europe. This amounted to tacit acceptance of Soviet dominance across the region for the rest of the Cold War.

Russian Foreign Policy in Transition

The second broad theme evident from the case studies is the transitional nature of Russia's foreign policy orientation to its European Near Abroad. This theme applies to the years between CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985 to the resignation of President Boris Yeltsin in 1999. Russia's foreign policy orientation in its Near Abroad transitioned from maintenance of the status quo to a revisionist desire to recover lost prestige and honor after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As such, the country's policies oscillated between multilateral engagement with its European neighbors and the West back towards unilateral actions within the RSC by the end of Yeltsin's tenure as President. Finally, foreign policy decisions in the Near Abroad were taken reactively as a means of maintaining control of the crumbling Soviet empire in the short period between 1985 and 1991. Once Yeltsin was in power, his foreign policy shifted back towards a proactive policy once it became evident that full Russian partnership with the West was not likely.

Clearly, Gorbachev presided over dissolution of the Soviet Union. As a devout communist, Gorbachev desired maintenance of the status quo across the Warsaw Pact even as his domestic introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* signaled acknowledgement

of the need for vast Soviet internal reforms. Introductions of such reforms cascaded to other countries within the Warsaw Pact. Rather than acting to arrest the decline of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact through force and coercion as his predecessors had done, Gorbachev decided on a unilateral course of inaction. Signaling his intention to withdraw Soviet military forces from the Near Abroad after his 1988 United Nations speech, Gorbachev steadily lost control over the Soviet sphere after the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989. As the Soviet Union crumbled, Gorbachev possessed neither the national means nor the intention of intervening in the Near Abroad to maintain the extant RSC. Russian leadership, custodianship, and protection of its satellites evaporated as the Soviet Union dissolved.

Yeltsin presided over the final demise of the Soviet Union through his creation of the Slavic Trinity between Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine in December 1991. After Gorbachev's resignation and early initial Western acceptance of Yeltsin as his heir-apparent, Russian foreign policy in the Near Abroad became even less predictable as Yeltsin attempted to deal with three major crises. During the first period from 1991 to the end of 1993, Russia suffered internal governmental crisis. Yeltsin signaled his intention to transform Russia into a democratic state based on introduction of free enterprise, market reforms, and political freedoms. This period served as the honeymoon period between the West and the new Russian Federation. Yet, Russian reforms failed to deliver results for the majority of Russians. After the attempted October 1993 coup, Yeltsin shifted course away from a westernizing course to a revisionist approach aimed at reviving relations with states in its Near Abroad.

Beginning with the introduction of the new military doctrine in 1993, Russia communicated the high priority it placed on stabilizing and strengthening its relations with its European neighbors. Utilizing the protection of the large Russian diaspora, intervention remained a consistent pretext for foreign policy decision-making with regard to Near Abroad during Yeltsin's tenure. After his appointment of Yevgeni Primakov in 1995, Russia increased its emphasis on rebuilding regional, multilateral relations. Despite such an emphasis, states in Central and Eastern Europe remained suspicious of Russia's true intentions, limiting the effectiveness of the CIS.

The second crisis of the 1990s was Yeltsin's decision to prosecute a costly war in Chechnya from 1994 to 1996. The war was ostensibly initiated to prevent Chechen independence and the growth of extremism within Russian boundaries, but also served as a diversion for the dire condition of the Russian economy. The conflict demonstrated Russia's renewed intention to use force unilaterally, regardless of regional or international condemnation. Chechnya also demonstrated the transition from a reactive foreign policy to a proactive tendency to use military force. This reinforced Russia's revisionist proclivity towards the strength-based strategy employed within the region during the Cold War.

The Asian financial meltdown of 1997 constituted the third crisis for Yeltsin's regime, triggering commensurate decline in Russian GDP by the end of 1998 based on the precipitous decline in global hydrocarbon commodities. Primakov's moves to formalize joint Russian-NATO cooperation stalled as Yeltsin's often erratic leadership led to the dismissal of several ministers, including Primakov, during his final year in office. Yeltsin's unexpected resignation in 1999 and temporary appointment of Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister signaled the beginning of a third broad theme in Russian foreign policy.

Russian Foreign Policy as Revisionist & Transitional

The final broad theme in Russian foreign policy occurred as President then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin assumed control of the Kremlin from 2000 to present. Putin piloted a revisionist Russian foreign policy for the duration of his first presidential term. For the most part, his successor, Dmitri Medvedev, remained on this course as the real power still resided with Prime Minister Putin from 2008 to 2012. Putin's prosecution of a lengthy war in Chechnya from 2000 to 2009 and the war against Georgia in 2008 were both executed unilaterally but for different reasons.

The beginning of the Chechen conflict converged with US policy interests in this region as both attempted to combat international terrorism after 9/11. Putin acquiesced to US military presence in Central Asia in tacit exchange for limiting criticism of his efforts in Chechnya. But the war itself served only to pacify radical elements within the North Caucasus rather than subduing them completely. Putin's installation of pro-Kremlin Ramzan Kadyrov and the extensive reconstruction investment in Grozny have created

only a visage of peace in a relatively unstable region. As Matthew Sussex argues, the Kremlin likely believed it had no alternative but to adopt the revisionist course of using massive military force to preserve Russian national sovereignty.¹ Allowing Chechnya to become fully independent may have initiated a “domino effect with the potential to lead to the complete fragmentation of the Russian state along ethnic lines.”²

In addition, Putin’s regime was shaken by the Color Revolutions in its two most important European Near Abroad neighbors – Ukraine and Georgia. Putin believed the revolutions were devised and orchestrated at the behest of the United States through Ukrainian and Georgian surrogates. After the revolutions, the Kremlin was incensed by both countries’ desire to join NATO, highlighting Russia’s sense of vulnerability to Western encroachment and isolation from Western Europe and the United States.³ NATO’s expansion in 2004, the largest since the organization’s inception in 1949 and nearly simultaneously with these revolutions, only fueled Putin’s harsh criticism of perceived illegitimate Western infringement into a region Russia views as its preordained sphere of interest.⁴ Russia’s sensitive northern and southern European flanks were exposed as the three Baltic states along with Romania and Bulgaria were accepted into the European RSC. The combined effect on the Russian national psyche created suspicion over western intentions which Putin used to his advantage.

After 2005, Putin’s speeches and foreign policy documents included incendiary language against further NATO expansion and perceived territorial aggrandizement. His 2007 Munich Security Forum Speech chastised NATO expansion as provocative and illegal, based on NATO’s Founding Act with Russia. Putin’s eventual war with Georgia in 2008 was portrayed as a response to Georgian military instigation within the two Russian-supported breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In reality, this war was Putin’s response to the West and neighboring countries in its Near Abroad,

¹ Sussex, Matthew. “The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR,” in Sussex, Matthew, ed. *Conflict in the Former Soviet Union*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 202- 203.

² Sussex, “The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR,” 203.

³ Tsygankov, Andrei P. *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor In International Relations*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 244.

⁴ Trenin, Dmitri. “Russia’s Spheres of Interest Not Influence.” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 2009): 3–22.

demonstrating the Kremlin's inclinations for protecting privileged interests in these regions.

Russia's Brand of Multilateralism - The Role of Regional Organizations

The Central and Eastern European countries comprise a contentious seam between Western Europe and the Russian Federation. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, these countries regained their independence. During the 1990s, the Kremlin sought to restore some measure of credibility and control within these former Soviet spaces through a number of multilateral organizations. Creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) were both attempts to reconstitute Russia's primacy across former Soviet lands. Despite Russian intentions to solidify relations within the CIS through the 1992 Tashkent Agreement, Central and Eastern European states remained reluctant to commit to any Russian dominated institution restraining their actions.

The CSTO serves as the principle regional multilateral organization for preserving Russia's regional control based on agreements established with six other regional states. The organization was originally conceived as a potential balancing institution to formalize regional military cooperation as an alternative to NATO. While the framework for the organization includes provisions for cooperative military endeavors within the region, member states are prohibited from entering into additional regional security arrangements. This effectively constrains member states from leaning toward the European security complex.⁵ Russia's strongest allies in this alliance remain Belarus and the Central Asian states. As part of the organization's mandate, the Kremlin retains its right to act militarily or otherwise within the CSTO, pre-emptively if necessary.⁶ As a result, the CSTO remains weak and unable to attract broader regional appeal – in short, a “paper tiger.”⁷

From a broader Eurasian perspective, Putin sought to establish two separate organizations aimed, ostensibly, at strengthening regional integration across the RSC. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), as its name implies, espouses shared financial and trade efforts across the Eurasian landmass. In reality, only Belarus, Kazakhstan, and

⁵ Sussex, “The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR,” 47.

⁶ Sussex, “The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR,” 50.

⁷ Sussex, “The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR,” 62.

Armenia are parties to the agreement establishing the organization on 1 January 2015.⁸ The other EurAsian Union (EAU) is President Putin's effort to re-integrate post-Soviet countries into a geopolitical alliance similar to the European Union building on the extant CIS. Announced by Putin in an *Izvestia* editorial piece in October 2011, the underlying rationale for the creation of the EAU is the formalization of the 2007 Eurasian Customs Union (signed by Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) and the Common Economic Space.⁹ Despite such efforts, most states in the Eurasian space, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, are reluctant to further strengthen ties with a dominant Russia. Instead, these countries continue to resist Russian advances through their own bilateral arrangements beyond Russia.¹⁰

Another bilateral organization Russia uses to espouse its multilateral intentions is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. As a multi-national institution, the two great powers, China and Russia, have utilized this organization to achieve divergent objectives. Other member states include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Russia views the organization primarily through the lens of securitization across its Asian expanses. Through military cooperation and arms sales with China, Russia hopes to prevent further Chinese integration into post-Soviet Central Asian spaces.¹¹ China, on the other hand, uses the SCO as a vehicle to encourage economic partnering with the Central Asian states and Russia's Far East. After the 2008-2009 financial crisis, Russia tacitly cooperated with China to encourage foreign investment into the hydrocarbon industry but remained wary of Chinese incursion into the pro-Russian Central Asian states. Based on differing perceptions of the role of the SCO to the two principle states, it remains an organization broadly defined by opportunistic cooperation and great power competition.

Summation of Three Russian Foreign Policy Themes

⁸ Cohen, Ariel. *Russia's Eurasian Union Could Endanger the Neighborhood and U.S. Interests*. Backgrounder. Washington, D.C: The Heritage Foundation, (14 June 2013), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/06/russias-eurasian-union-could-endanger-the-neighborhood-and-us-interests>

⁹ Putin, Vladimir. "A new integration project for Eurasia - a future that is born today" <http://izvestia.ru/news/502761#ixzz3ZupqfxrB>

¹⁰ Popescu, Nicu. *Eurasian Union: The Real, The Imaginary and The Likely*. Chaillot Papers. Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, September 2014), 19.

¹¹ Sussex, "The Shape of the Security Order in the Former USSR," 55.

In summary, three broad themes emerge from Russian foreign policy with respect to its Near Abroad. During the Cold War, these policies were mostly frozen and static as the Soviet Union used force and pro-Soviet governments within the Warsaw Pact to maintain regional stability. Regional stability allowed the Soviet Union to continue to influence events globally through its role as a superpower in a bipolar contest with the United States, Western Europe, and other democratically, capitally-minded nations.

Once the Cold War ended, the second theme was one of transition as Yeltsin and the Kremlin struggled to rebuild Russia's great power status through a decade filled with governmental instability, economic decline, and Russian societal discontent. Russia's identity as a superpower and a regional hegemon were extinguished in the short time from the felling of the Berlin Wall until Gorbachev was forced to resign as the last CPSU General Secretary at the end of 1991. Despite these crises, Russia remained a great regional power as a result of its large geographic size, energy resource wealth, and large population relative to all of its Near Abroad neighbors. Yeltsin and his policy elite shifted from a westernizing course after 1993 to one which sought to rebuild the state from within through outreach to the Near Abroad. Though the CIS and the CSO were implemented in part to restore some level of regional unity, the newly independent states of the Near Abroad desired retention of their independence, always suspicious of Russia's intentions. As NATO expansion commenced in the mid-1990s, Russia national identity was further scarred by loss of territorial influence in Central and Eastern Europe and debilitating economic duress at home. The first Chechen War and the faltering economy after 1998 resulted in a period of further governmental instability, facilitating the eventual and rather sudden rise of President Vladimir Putin.

With Putin in power, a third broad foreign policy theme emerged with respect to the Near Abroad – a transitional aspiration to reestablish regional hegemony vis-à-vis the Near Abroad as a means of regaining global power and influence along with degraded national prestige and honor. Nearly 25 years have passed since dissolution of the Soviet Union. In that time, the country's policy elite led by Yeltsin and Putin have struggled to rectify the tension between Russia's enduring aspiration to restore itself as a global power with its handling of foreign policy in its own Near Abroad. While Putin continually espouses the inherent Russian right to act independently of international organizations in

its sphere of interest, it has reduced leverage across the Near Abroad as its policies often devolve to coercion and blunt force.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 is the latest manifestation of a foreign policy course which threatens countries in the Near Abroad and brings Russia into conflict with its historically significant others – the EU and the United States. Russia thus presides over a strength-based regional security order in which it is attempting to reassert its hegemony over the weaker states of its Soviet Past. A summation of these findings are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Russian Foreign Policy Orientation Within Post-Cold War RSC

Soviet and Russian Leaders	Foreign Policy Orientations	Foreign Policy Roles	Crises
Stalin (1949-1953)	-Status Quo -Unilateral -Proactive	N/A	-Re-establish Territorial Control
Cold War Leaders (Krushchev – Brezhnev) (1953 – 1982*)	-Status Quo -Unilateral -Proactive	N/A	- Stalin's Death - 1953 – East Germany Uprising - Krushchev's Secret Speech - 1956 – Hungary - 1968 – Czechoslovakia - 1979 - Afghanistan
Gorbachev (1985-1991)	-Status Quo -Unilateral (through inaction) -Reactive	Leadership Custodianship Protectorship LIMITED	- Dissolution of USSR
Yeltsin (1991-1999)	Status Quo → Revisionist -Multilateral → Unilateral -Proactive → Reactive	Leadership Custodianship Protectorship TRANSITIONAL	-1991-1993 – Internal crisis -1994-1996 – First Chechen War -1998 – Russian Financial Meltdown
Putin (2000-2008)	Revisionist -Unilateral w/ Multilateral -Veneer -Proactive	Leadership Custodianship Protectorship STRENGTH-BASED	-2000 – Second Chechen War -Terrorism and Oligarchs -2003-2005-Color Revolutions -2005 NATO Expansion -2008 Georgia War

Source: Adapted from: Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier's RPSF

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